



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



FRIDAY — 6 MAY 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	05/06 Worries: cases rise; strain on health care
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/06/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#covid-hospitalizations-cases-us
GIST	When the coronavirus was in retreat across the United States in late February, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued new recommendations that veered away from depending on the number of new cases in a community to determine the need for pandemic safety measures.

The focus shifted more toward the number of hospitalized people with the virus. Far more new cases than before would be required to push a community into the medium or high-risk categories.

The change turned most of the U.S. map green at a stroke. Until then, 95 percent of counties in the United States were considered high-risk, but afterward, fewer than one-third of Americans were living in places in that category, the agency said. The new guidelines gave millions of people confidence to remove their face masks, and recommended that as long as the pressure on hospitals remained manageable, the country could return to some version of normal life.

That strategy will be put to the test in the next few weeks, because hospitalizations are rising again nationally. As of Wednesday, an average of [nearly 18,000 people with the coronavirus are in American hospitals](#), an increase of almost 20 percent from two weeks ago. The figure includes patients who are in the hospital because they are very ill with Covid-19, as well as those admitted for other reasons who test positive on arrival. More than half of American adults have at least one underlying chronic condition, and [for many of them](#), the winter Omicron wave wasn't as mild as it was for others.

The influx has been even steeper in the largest high-risk area now on [the national map, the hot spot that has spread across upstate New York and spilled into nearby states](#). According to the New York State, there were [2,119 patients hospitalized in](#) the state with Covid on Tuesday, 47 percent more than the figure from two weeks before.

The figure is still well below the winter Omicron peak of January, when about 13,000 people were hospitalized statewide. But it has been increasing, [propelled by rapidly spreading BA.2 subvariants](#), which were detected in Central New York and [have become a growing share of new U.S. cases](#).

In the University of Rochester Medical Center system, which includes six hospitals in the Finger Lakes region and in western New York, coronavirus hospitalizations have quadrupled in recent weeks, rising to about 200 patients from a low of about 50 in early April, according to Chip Partner, a spokesman for the hospital system.

Most of those patients were in the hospital for other reasons, like surgery, but tested positive when they were admitted, Mr. Partner said, adding that relatively few Covid patients have needed intensive care recently.

At the same time, staffing shortages at hospitals in the region have been compounded by a recent increase in infections among their staffs. At F.F. Thompson Hospital in Canandaigua, N.Y., 45 of the hospital's 1,750 workers were out with the virus recently, and there are 252 unfilled job openings.

"Covid is here, Covid is an issue, but the main challenge up here is the staffing," said Michael Stapleton, the hospital's chief executive.

Other hot spots are also putting pressure on health care systems. In [Puerto Rico](#), 245 people on the island were in hospitals this week with the virus, more than five times the caseload from a month ago.

Though hospitalizations generally lag behind the trends in new cases, they remain among the most reliable kinds of data about the pandemic, experts agree — much more so than official reports of positive test results, which [experts say significantly understate the true number of infections](#).

Hospitalizations are reported fairly rigorously. "For hospital data, even given that all the people were not admitted because of Covid, we can be sure that the numbers are pretty accurate," said Dr. Eric S. Toner, a senior scholar at the Center for Health Security at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

"So it's the best data source we have now. The number of new Covid admissions is the number that I pay the most attention to."

	<p>About 11 percent of people hospitalized with coronavirus infections in the United States were in intensive care, as of Wednesday, according to federal data.</p> <p>The C.D.C. is also keeping a close eye on the nature of hospitalizations. “We’re seeing less oxygen use, less I.C.U. stays, and we haven’t fortunately seen any increase in death associated with them,” compared with earlier periods of the pandemic, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the agency director, said last week.</p> <p>While the criteria for declaring a county to be at high, medium or low risk have changed, the threat that the virus and its new variants pose has not. Most experts say that everyone should continue to be tested frequently if they are mixing in large groups, and that people who are vulnerable should consider continuing to wear masks in indoor public settings, even if they are not required.</p> <p>This week the C.D.C. repeated its recommendation that travelers wear masks in airplanes and airports, and on trains and buses, even though a judge struck down a federal mask mandate for public transportation last month.</p> <p>“The only way to slow the surge is to test and isolate if positive,” Ms. Aspinall said. That would help stave off a looming problem for medical workers.</p> <p>“Another surge of hospitalizations would be extraordinarily difficult,” Dr. Toner said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/06 Ukraine launches northeast offensive
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/06/world/ukraine-russia-war-news#here-are-the-latest-developments-in-the-war-in-ukraine
GIST	<p>Ukrainian soldiers went on the offensive against Russian forces in northeast Ukraine on Friday, seeking to drive them back from outside two key cities, as the grueling battle for control over territory in the east increasingly turns into a brutal war of attrition, with neither side able to score a major breakthrough in the fighting.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials are bracing for what they fear could be even more intense Russian assaults over the weekend, as President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia seeks to claim a victory that he can showcase on Monday, Russia’s Victory Day holiday, an annual celebration of the Soviet defeat of Nazi Germany. Local leaders announced new curfews and issued urgent warnings about the threat of stepped-up Russian missile strikes.</p> <p>Assessing the successes claimed by the two sides is difficult, with one taking a few villages one day in one area, only to lose just as many along a different part of the 300-mile-long front. But Ukraine’s assertion that it was shifting to offensive actions in part of the country came as more sophisticated weapons and long-range artillery provided by Western allies were flowing to the front, allowing Ukraine to take more aggressive action.</p> <p>“There are fierce battles going on, as well as the transition from defensive operations to offensive actions in the Kharkiv and Izium areas,” the Ukrainian commander in chief, Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, said he told Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, on Thursday.</p> <p>At the same time, Russian forces appear to have escalated their attempts to trap and destroy Ukrainian units farther south, in and around the cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk and the towns of Lyman and Barvinkove.</p> <p>In the ruined city of Mariupol, where fighting continued to rage, an evacuation convoy was dispatched again on Friday to the Azovstal steel plant, where about 200 civilians are still believed to be trapped underground, along with the last Ukrainian soldiers defending the city. The Russian bombardment of the factory continued overnight, as the Ukrainian fighters reported bloody close-quarter battles in a labyrinth</p>

	of tunnels and nuclear fallout shelters, in what could prove to be the final battle in one of the war's most savage campaigns.
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HEADLINE	05/05 Historic heatwave Mother's Day weekend?
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/05/weather/historic-heat-wave-texas-forecast-weekend-weather/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A remarkable early-season heat wave, with temperatures typically seen in August, is set to bake much of Texas, the Plains and the Midwest this weekend into early next week.</p> <p>As many as 120 record high temperatures across parts of at least 13 states are forecast to be tied or broken from Friday through Tuesday, with heat indices -- combining temperature and humidity to forecast what it will feel like -- nearing 110 degrees for some.</p> <p>Some of the hottest weather will be felt across west central Texas, including the city of San Angelo. Texas is no stranger to scalding temperatures, but heat in early May typically means mid-80s, not above 100.</p> <p>"It is pretty rare to get a heat wave that is looking this extreme in early May. Usually, this is the kind of heat that we see in July or August," said Stephen Harrison, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in San Angelo.</p> <p>Highs in San Angelo are forecast to soar between 103 and 105 degrees, nearly 20 degrees above seasonal averages and rivaling records that have been standing since the 1920s.</p> <p>Add the humidity and it will feel closer to 110 degrees each afternoon. Much of the state will be baking in 90 to 100 degree heat and feeling even hotter this weekend.</p> <p>NWS meteorologist Matthew Brady warns that given the extreme heat indices, limiting outdoor exposure is paramount this Mother's Day weekend.</p> <p>"Heat exhaustion and heat stroke are both possible during such a heat wave, so staying hydrated, staying in the shade and lower your outdoor exposure is a must if you plan on being outdoors this weekend," said Brady, who is based in Austin, Texas.</p> <p>"When heat waves come this early in the year, people are usually not acclimated, so there's always a risk for heat-related illnesses, especially during such a prolonged event," Harrison told CNN.</p> <p>Historically speaking, heat waves are the deadliest weather disaster in the US, accounting for nearly 150 fatalities per year, more than hurricanes and tornadoes combined.</p> <p>The widespread nature of the heat across Texas has already prompted officials to prepare for higher demand on the electricity grid.</p> <p>The Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) announced on Wednesday that it has asked power plants to postpone outages and return from outages already in progress "in order to serve Texans this weekend."</p> <p>According to the release statement, ERCOT will deploy all tools available to manage the grid reliably and projects there will be sufficient generation to meet demand for electricity.</p> <p>The council has been scrutinized after record cold temperatures in February 2021 caused the state to see its highest electricity demand and more than 200 people died during the power crisis, with the most common cause of death being hypothermia.</p> <p>It's not just Texas sweltering in the coming days. Parts of the Southwest, Plains, South and Midwest are in for summer-like temperatures as well.</p>

On Saturday and Sunday, more than 50 record high temperatures are expected from as far west as Albuquerque, New Mexico, to as far east as New Orleans.

By Monday into Tuesday, the record heat expands farther to the north and east, impacting St. Louis, Memphis, Nashville and Indianapolis. As many as 70 additional record highs could be tied or broken early next week, as temperatures range between the upper 80s and low 90s.

The heat will just make the drought worse

The excessive heat will add insult to injury for those battling an early fire season and continue to intensify the already dire drought conditions.

Extreme to exceptional drought -- the two worst categories -- in both Texas and New Mexico have greatly expanded in recent weeks and are likely to continue with the upcoming heat wave.

"This weekend's heat wave will only further deepen the drought as the higher temperatures continue to evaporate what little moisture remains in the soils," CNN meteorologist Brandon Miller says. "Drought and heat waves often go hand in hand in a positive feedback loop, as areas in drought tend to have less cloud cover and lower humidity, which can make heat waves more likely."

Nearly a quarter of Texas is now in exceptional drought — the most severe category — which is the largest area for the state since 2014.

"It has been really bad, this is our wet time of year and we're still not getting the heavy rains we need. There is plenty of dry fuels around and the extreme heat this weekend will only exacerbate the issue," Harrison told CNN.

New Mexico saw the largest increase in the two worst categories of drought in the last week, adding more than 14,000 square miles, which is nearly double the size of New Jersey.

New Mexico, which is battling the [Hermits Peak-Calf Canyon fire](#) -- the largest fire so far in 2022 -- has seen more land burned so far in 2022 than in the past two full years combined.

The Hermits Peak-Calf Canyon fire alone has charred more than 165,000 acres -- now the second-largest fire in the state on record.

Though fire weather conditions slightly improved Thursday, [another round of gusty winds coupled with the extreme heat](#) will create high fire danger over much of the area over the weekend and into early next week.

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HEADLINE	05/06 Children get long Covid too
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/06/health/children-long-covid-wellness/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)November 10 is a day Kim Ford remembers too well. It was the day last year when her 9-year-old son, Jack, was scheduled to get his Covid-19 vaccine at the school clinic. They were excited that he'd finally have some protection, but on November 9, he had the sniffles.</p> <p>"When he woke up [November 10] and he was feeling even worse, I said, 'You know what, let's test you before you go in, because I don't want you to get the Covid vaccine if you actually have Covid,' " the Michigan mom said.</p> <p>Jack tested positive for Covid-19 that day and he's lived with the symptoms ever since.</p> <p>It has kept him from staying at school all day. He has to limit how much he plays baseball with the other neighborhood kids. Even playing Fortnite for too long can leave him feeling sick the next day.</p>

He's one of potentially millions of kids with long Covid.

"My stomach hurts. It's kind of hard to breathe. You have a stuffy nose. It's just an absurd amount of things that you can feel," Jack Ford said. "It's really annoying at times. It's not like a cold, you know, it feels like Covid.

"People may think you're feeling faking it, but you're not faking it. You feel like you have Covid," he added.

'An undiagnosed issue'

It's not clear how many children go on to develop long Covid, because there's not enough research on it in this age group, [some experts say](#).

Almost 13 million children have tested positive for Covid-19 since the start of the pandemic, according to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#). [Studies](#) suggest that between 2% and 10% of those children will develop long Covid, but the number may be larger. Many parents may not know their child has long Covid, or the child's pediatrician hasn't recognized it as such.

In adults, [some research](#) puts the number around 30% of cases.

"I personally believe that this is a very much an undiagnosed issue," said [Dr. Sara Kristen Sexson Tejtzel](#), who helps lead a long Covid pediatric clinic at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston.

Many doctors treating children at long Covid clinics across the country say they have long waits for appointments. Some are booked through September.

An unusual range of symptoms

There are no specific tests for long Covid. It's not clear which children will have it, as it can happen even when a child has a mild case of Covid-19.

"It's startling how many of these children present and have a range of symptoms that we haven't fully appreciated. Some are coming in with heart failure after asymptomatic Covid infections," said [Dr. Jeffrey Kahn](#), chief of the Division of Pediatric Infectious Disease at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. "What's striking to me is that it usually occurs about four weeks after infection, and infection can be really asymptomatic, which is really startling."

Even when kids with long Covid are tested for ailments that might cause these symptoms, it's possible nothing will show up.

"The tested me, and it looked like nothing was wrong with me, but they tried their best to find something," Jack Ford said.

His pulmonary function test and EKG came back normal. "The Covid clinic said this is very common in kids with long Covid. Sometimes, all the tests come back normal," Kim Ford said.

[Dr. Amy Edwards](#), who runs the pediatric long Covid clinic at UH Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital in Cleveland, agreed that it happens a lot.

"We also scoped them, and their GI tracts are normal. I do a big immune workup, and their immune system appears normal. Everything 'looks normal,' but the kids aren't functioning like normal," Edwards said. "I tell the families, 'you have to remember, there are limits to what medical science understands and can test for.' Sometimes, we're just not smart enough to know where to look for it."

Adults' problems tend to be more obvious, Edwards said, because they are more likely to have organ dysfunction that shows up on tests.

Doctors are still trying to understand why long Covid happens this way in children. They are also figuring out what symptoms define long Covid in children. Some studies in adults show a range of [200 symptoms](#), but there is no universal clinical case definition.

At Sexson Tejte's clinic in Texas, children tend to fall into a few categories. Some have fatigue, brain fog and severe headaches, "to the point where the some kids aren't able to go to school, grades are failing, those types of issues," she said.

Another group has cardiac issues like heart palpitations, chest pains and dizziness, especially when they go back to their regular activities.

Another group has stomach problems. A lot of these kids also have a change in their sense of taste and smell.

Sexson Tejte said it isn't totally different from the symptoms adults have, "but it's not the mixed bag of different organ system involvement with adults."

'Once that bucket is empty, that's it'

One of Jack Ford's symptoms affects the amount of energy he has for typical activities.

"Long Covid patients have post-exertional malaise, which is Jack's biggest issue," Kim Ford said. "So if he overdoes it -- and it doesn't even have to be physically overdoing it. It could be he was really upset about something the day before, or he could be really mentally engaged with something like watching TV or playing video games sitting in his chair -- will knock him out."

Energy has become such a problem that Jack can't go to school for a full day. His parents started him back with one to two hours a day and have gradually increased it to about 5½ hours a day.

"We've been trying to bump him up to six, but it hasn't worked so far," Kim Ford said. "He's woken up pretty miserable the next day."

Edwards, who runs the long Covid clinic in Cleveland, says she has to talk to parents about carefully balancing how much energy their children expend. Most healthy people can push through if they're tired, but those with long Covid can't. "It's like they have one bucket of energy, and it has to be used carefully for school, for play, to watch TV. Every single thing they do takes energy, and once that bucket is empty, that's it," Edwards said.

Some of her teen patients are exhausted just dealing with typical drama at school.

"Long-haulers have to think about every single aspect of their day and when they can expend that energy. They have to have that balance. Otherwise, they run out."

Many also have anxiety. Some of that may stem from the ailment itself or from the doubt they've heard from doctors or adults when they say they don't feel well.

Experts across the country say they've heard from patients whose complaints are ignored, even after a stark change in their health. They've been told that they are being dramatic or seeking attention, or that the symptoms are all in their head.

"I don't want to be too critical, but there are some doctors out there who just dismiss it outright," said [Dr. Alexandra Yonts](#), director of the post-Covid clinic at Children's National in Washington. "The kids then just struggle. They get passed around from place to place."

Yonts thinks there needs to be better acknowledgment among doctors that long Covid can be a real problem.

"I've got two kids in wheelchairs after having had Covid who were never in wheelchairs before. There's one kid on crutches. I've got a kid who lost the use of her hands," Edward said. "These kids should be believed."

Help is available, but not all have access

There's no specific treatment for long Covid, but most of these clinics are multidisciplinary.

At Edwards' clinic, which opened last year, experts can address pulmonary issues, digestive problems, physical rehabilitation, sleep issues, mental health problems and others. There's a nutritionist on staff, as well as an acupuncturist and a pediatrician who is licensed in Chinese herbal medicine.

In addition to working up a child's schedule so they can determine where to spend their energy and when to take breaks, Edwards' clinic teaches kids to meditate. They do massage therapy and mind-body exercises.

"Children need multiple elements of help. They get significantly better, really they do, if we're aggressive and they get intensive wraparound support and therapy," Edwards said.

But not all children are able to get into a clinic.

"I've talked to so many people working with pediatric Covid recovery, and they all say the same thing: 'We are worried about the kids who aren't getting the help, who don't have the parents who can advocate for them or navigate the medical system.' It keeps me up at night," Edwards said.

A lot of what her clinic does is to encourage kids to get enough sleep and to eat healthy food, but not all families can afford healthy food.

"It terrifies me for those families in particular, because they're already starting behind. And now they have kids with Covid long-haul," Edwards said. "You just have to hope more people will become aware of the problem and try to help."

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HEADLINE	05/06 China lockdowns lead to shipping delays
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/06/business/china-lockdowns-global-port-chaos-supply-chains-intl-hnk/index.html
GIST	<p>Hong Kong (CNN Business)Global shipping was just starting to recover from the chaos of the pandemic. Now port congestion and delays are back and could be around for a while.</p> <p>Covid lockdowns in China have wreaked havoc at Shanghai, the world's biggest container port, and are now causing problems at other major ports around the world.</p> <p>Some Chinese cities, including Shanghai, have started easing Covid restrictions in recent days, but experts say that the damage has already been done, and global shipping will suffer well into the summer. That could exert even more pressure on global supply chains already reeling from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and keep inflation running hot.</p> <p>Data from Project44, which tracks global supply chains, showed that shipment delays between China and major US and European ports have quadrupled since late March, when China shut down the city of Shanghai, which has the world's busiest container port.</p> <p>By the end of April, ships from China to Seattle were taking four days longer than expected to arrive, up from about one day the previous month.</p>

The time it takes ships to leave China and arrive at major ports around the world increased steadily over the past year, but there had been some signs of relief since December with transit times between Shanghai and Long Beach, for example, dropping in January and February.

Since March, however, there's been a sharp increase again in transit times on that route.

To add to the problem, many truck drivers have [struggled to reach ports](#) in China to pick up containers because of travel restrictions and Covid testing requirements. Shipping giant Maersk warned in an advisory last month that trucking services in Shanghai would be "severely" impacted by these restrictions.

"With the manufacturing industry being shuttered [in Shanghai] and truckers unable to travel quickly, exports have been reduced, and shipment delays have increased," said Josh Brazil, director of Supply Chain Data Insights at Project44.

Delays will "continue into the summer months," as factories struggle to return to normal operations in Shanghai, he added.

Although authorities have allowed some businesses to restart production, many workers are still stuck in quarantine at home. Factories that do reopen are facing component shortages and difficulty in securing trucks to carry goods into or out of the port.

"The ripples in shipment delays are only beginning to become visible and are expected to extend well into the next few months," said Brazil.

Shanghai — China's leading financial center and most populous city — has been under a strict lockdown since late March. More than 8 million residents are still banned from leaving their residential compounds. The Covid restrictions have spread to other cities, including Beijing — the nation's capital.

Shanghai port remained open throughout the lockdown, but data from various shipping firms show an increasing backlog of ships and containers.

US supply chain companies have expressed concerns about fresh chaos heading towards American ports, which are still recovering from the severe congestion and delays they suffered last year.

Shelley Simpson, chief commercial officer for JB Hunt Transport Services, said late last month that while there has been "a temporary relief" at US ports, things may get a lot "a lot worse" this summer because of what's happening in China.

It "just takes a little bit of disruption to really change the environment all over again," she added.

Ships and containers jam the ports

Shipping queues are getting worse in China — and other parts of the world.

Nearly 20% of container vessels globally are currently waiting outside congested ports, according to a survey published last Thursday by Windward, an Israel-based global maritime data firm.

Almost a quarter of those unberthed ships are stuck outside Chinese ports. That's 412 ships, up 58% since February, the survey added.

It's clear that lockdowns in China have caused a bottleneck, the firm said.

Across China, at least 27 cities are under full or partial lockdown, which could be impacting up to 185 million residents across the country, according to latest CNN calculation on Wednesday. Beijing [effectively shut down](#) its largest district this week.

President Xi Jinping signaled this week that China would continue with its zero tolerance approach to Covid. On Thursday, Xi told all levels of government to "resolutely adhere to the zero-Covid policy."

China is home to seven of the world's top ten container ports, including Shanghai, Ningbo-Zhoushan, Shenzhen, and Hong Kong. In Shanghai — the epicenter of China's current Covid outbreak, the situation remains severe.

The number of vessels waiting at the Port of Shanghai had increased to 384 by April 25, up 27% from a month earlier, according to most recent data from S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Pressure is also building on other Chinese ports, as vessels try to find alternative ports to berth. Ships have faced growing delays since late March outside Ningbo-Zhoushan port, the world's third largest port, less than a hundred miles from Shanghai, according to Lloyd's List Intelligence.

Containers are also piling up because of truck shortages.

At the peak of the lockdown in Shanghai, containers were sitting for as many as 15 days at the port before being picked up by truckers, up from fewer than 5 days when the restrictions first took effect, Project 44 data showed. The average wait time has since come down but was still 10 days last Wednesday.

Zhang Wei, vice mayor of Shanghai, acknowledged last week that the city is seeing "reduced efficiency" in cargo transport and "poor logistics" since the lockdown.

Manufacturing and trade take a hit

The turmoil at the ports has already hit China's factories and foreign trade, as manufacturers have to wait longer to get raw materials.

It is also harder for them to ship their products to customers. Inventories of finished goods have surged to the highest level in about a decade, as products pile up in warehouses due to weak demand and the difficulty of finding trucks to move them.

Latest PMI surveys — released on Saturday — showed that factory activity slumped to the worst level since February 2020, when China was battling the initial Covid outbreak. New export orders that manufacturers received in April fell at a much faster pace than in March.

The decline in export orders showed that the chaos at some major ports, including Shanghai, have hit China's trade with the rest of the world, according to Goldman Sachs analysts.

"Worryingly, there was plenty of evidence of worsening supply pressures, with supplier delivery times collapsing, input prices surging and inventories of finished good rising to their highest since June 2012," wrote Mitul Kotecha, head of emerging markets strategy at TD Securities, in a report.

"Such supply pressures will have ramifications across supply chains globally, as already evidenced in some recent US Q1 earnings reports in the tech sector," he added.

Global inflation to go higher

The situation in Shanghai will push global inflation higher this year, said Daejin Lee, associate director at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

He pointed out that last year's inflation was driven by two factors — supply shortages of key parts owing to supply chain bottlenecks, and record high container freight rates.

Both problems continue this year, even as Russia's invasion of Ukraine has fueled global inflation by driving up prices for energy and other key commodities.

	<p>"Another lengthy delay" in seaborne supply of key parts because of China's port congestion could increase consumer prices "much faster than previously expected," Lee said.</p> <p>Maersk said Wednesday that freight rates will stay elevated as supply chain pressures persist. According to the company, congestion in sectors such as trucking and warehousing in mainland China, have created "bottlenecks, resulting in challenged supply chain management services and elevated rates."</p> <p>The company's average freight rate jumped 71% in the first quarter from a year earlier.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 'Nightmare' 2nd largest wildfire in NM history
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/06/weather/new-mexico-wildfires-friday/index.html
GIST	<p>Mora, New Mexico (CNN)Taming the second-largest wildfire in New Mexico history has been a nightmare for crews who have been battling the blaze for more than a month, a firefighter said Thursday.</p> <p>At one point, the ferocious Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Fire was spreading at 50 miles per hour, said Travis Regensberg, a general contractor brought in by New Mexico to help protect homes and buildings.</p> <p>"It's been a nightmare," Regensberg told CNN on Thursday. "It's been really tough for us. I've been on this 17 days straight -- three, four hours of sleep a night to protect the communities here."</p> <p>The firefighters have been protecting buildings by creating perimeter rings around them and using bulldozers to cut fire lines, he said. Additionally, they try to minimize harm to septic and well systems so that people have "a place to come back to," Regensberg said.</p> <p>High winds have been firefighters' biggest challenge.</p> <p>"This fire is a sleeping beast. I mean, I call it the devil," he added.</p> <p>The monster wildfire is a combination of two blazes raging about 12 miles northwest of Las Vegas, New Mexico. Collectively, the blazes have scorched more than 166,000 acres as of late Thursday, with 20% containment, according to the interagency reporting website Inciweb.</p> <p>It's grown into the second-largest wildfire in the state's history, according to Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. Dozens of homes have been destroyed and as many as 15,000 more are in danger, officials warned.</p> <p>"I'm 71 years old. I've never seen it this bad, this big -- I mean this was huge," resident Barbara Kuehl told CNN.</p> <p>Barbara Kuehl and her husband David Kuehl lost electricity in their home in Holman, located north of the fire-engulfed areas, but they are grateful that their house has been spared, she said.</p> <p>The sky is blue where she lives, Kuehl said, but she's thinking of those who aren't so lucky.</p> <p>"I'm just praying for people that are in danger, or houses or structures," she said. "Friends of ours have lost everything, nearly everything. ... It's really sad."</p> <p>Crews are battling five other wildfires in the state, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. So far this year, about 300,000 acres have been scorched in New Mexico -- more than was burned in the previous two years combined, CNN meteorologist Brandon Miller said.</p> <p>President Joe Biden declared a major disaster in New Mexico in response to the wildfire devastation, which allows the state to access critical federal aid.</p>

Crews brace for windy weekend

The winds eased Thursday and are expected to be calmer Friday, allowing for some progress in fighting the blaze, incident commander Dave Bales told CNN.

"The fire is actually laying down today (Thursday)," Bales said.

But officials are warning that wind will pick up again this weekend -- making firefighting even more challenging.

"Crews have made good progress holding & constructing fire lines & structure protection around the fire ahead of strong winds expected this weekend," Grisham said in a [tweet](#).

Gary Zell, a US Forest Service incident meteorologist, warned that clouds and smoke combined with low humidity and wind direction will contribute to "extreme burning conditions" during the weekend through Tuesday of next week.

Earlier, the area had been experiencing severe fire weather, prompting 24 red flag events in the 30 days, Bales added. Red flag alerts are issued when weather conditions are critical for wildfires to either spark or expand even larger.

Nearly 30 towns across San Miguel and Mora counties are under a full evacuation notice due to the wildfire.

"This is a long-term event, and we do not anticipate having 'control' of this fire any time soon," according to a statement from both counties.

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HEADLINE	05/05 UN: Ukraine infrastructure, men targeted
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/05/06/Ukraine-humanitarian-rights-situation-Security-Council-meeting/6411651807182/
GIST	<p>May 5 (UPI) -- Human rights experts detailed before the United Nations Security Council on Thursday a deteriorating situation in Ukraine, where Russian forces have attacked civilian infrastructure and forcibly disappeared Ukrainian men.</p> <p>Michelle Bachelet, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, told the meeting via teleconference in New York that her team in areas around the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv have documented Russian forces detaining, beating, summarily executing and in some cases abducting to Belarus and Russia local men they consider suspicious.</p> <p>"My staff met with families who are searching for their missing male relatives, desperate to know where they are, if they are alive and if they can get them back," she said.</p> <p>Her staff continues to document cases of possible enforced disappearances of local authority representatives, journalists, civil society activists, retired service men and the armed forces.</p> <p>Of the 180 cases they've identified, up roughly 10 from last week, five have been found dead with eight being pro-Russian people in government-controlled areas of Ukraine.</p> <p>Bachelet said her staff has heard of women being raped by Russian armed forces in locations under their control but they've also received allegations of sexual violence committed by both sides of the conflict.</p> <p>Evidence of torture, ill-treatment and summary executions of prisoners of war committed by both Russia and Ukraine is surfacing, she said.</p>

Martin Griffiths, the head of the U.N. humanitarian office, said apartment buildings, schools and hospitals in populated areas have been attacked with more 13 million people, including 7.7 million within the country, having become displaced due to the war.

"Destruction of civilian infrastructure has come to characterize this conflict," he said. "Lives have been uprooted, ripped apart and will never be the same again."

Though millions have fled conflict zone, many, including the elderly and disabled, have become stuck where they are, unable to flee areas under attack or gather supplies, he said.

Echoing Bachelet, Griffiths said the threat of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse and human trafficking in the country, "has risen hugely" since the start of the war.

"Allegations of sexual violence against women, girls, men and boys are mounting," he said.

Civilians have further been put at risk by roads that have been heavily contaminated with ordinances that prevent them from leaving and humanitarian aid from entering the conflict areas, he said.

Since the war began on Feb. 24, 3,280 civilians have been killed and another 3,451 have been injured, according to United Nations data.

Bachelet explained that the actual number of casualties is believed to be considerably higher and that they are the result of the use of explosive weapons such as shelling and missile and airstrikes on populated areas.

A cease-fire, which the United Nations has been lobbying for, even for one day would save the lives of 50 civilians, prevent between 30 and 70 others from being injured, including a dozen who would have been made disabled by the fighting, she said.

U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres told the meeting of his recent trip to Ukraine and Russia in search of achieving a humanitarian victory in the war that did secure a deal for the safe evacuation of some 500 people from the besieged southern Ukrainian city of Mariupol.

He told the meeting that he spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky a day prior and said that the U.N. will continue to scale up humanitarian operations.

"The war on Ukraine is senseless in its scope, ruthless in its dimensions and limitless in its potential for global harm," he said. "The cycle of death, destruction, dislocation and disruption must stop. It is high time to united and end this war."

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HEADLINE	05/05 Federal police squaring off L.A. protesters
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-05-05/why-were-federal-police-squaring-off-with-abortion-rights-protesters-in-l-a-s-streets
GIST	<p>An abortion rights protest had been going on peacefully for hours in downtown Los Angeles on Tuesday when a “help call” suddenly went out over police radios about 9 p.m.</p> <p>The SOS didn’t come from Los Angeles police officers, but a small group of federal officers with the Department of Homeland Security. They claimed, according to a statement by the LAPD, that they had come “under attack” from protesters while in their patrol cars near the intersection of 5th and Hill streets — about a half-mile away from the federal courthouse where the protest had begun and where federal officers have jurisdiction.</p>

Video showed protesters banging on the officers' cars and taunting them in a circle, and the officers shoving protesters and screaming at them to "back up."

Some witnesses have accused the officers on social media of instigating the confrontation by straying beyond the courthouse, driving into the crowd and using aggressive crowd control measures. Regardless, it [ratcheted up tensions between law enforcement and protesters](#) at what until then had been an orderly demonstration over a draft Supreme Court opinion that, if adopted, [would undercut abortion rights nationwide](#).

The scene also raised questions as to why federal police officers were squaring off with street protesters in L.A. — especially so many blocks from the courthouse.

"I am confused as to why federal agents were out in Los Angeles doing crowd control during last night's abortion rights protest?" activist and City Council candidate Albert Corado tweeted Wednesday, in response to a [video of the encounter](#) that has been viewed 3.5 million times.

A spokesman for the Federal Protective Service, an arm of Homeland Security to which the federal officers are assigned, referred questions from The Times to the main DHS public affairs office. In a statement Thursday, that office said DHS "strives every day to protect Americans' freedom of speech and other fundamental rights," and that the FPS "is conducting a review of this incident and the actions of any DHS personnel involved."

In its own statement, the LAPD said the department had not requested assistance from Federal Protective Service during the protests and that its officers had not been working in conjunction with the federal officers who called for help.

The incident is the latest in recent years in which federal agents have stepped into and seemingly exacerbated tensions at protests in U.S. cities, where their role and legitimacy in enforcing laws are on shaky legal ground, according to legal scholars.

Activists and city officials have called out the presence of federal authorities at protests in Portland, Ore., Seattle and Washington, D.C. In one altercation that drew fierce condemnation from elected officials and others, federal agents used forceful measures to clear racial justice protesters and members of the media from Lafayette Park near the White House in 2020, as then-President Trump was staging a heavily criticized photo shoot at a nearby church.

Legal experts said Tuesday's incident raised serious questions.

"What was the justification? What was the need for federal law enforcement officers to be deployed in that instance, where there appeared to be no threat to the federal courthouse?" said Jimmy Gurulé, a University of Notre Dame law professor and former undersecretary of enforcement at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, where he oversaw various federal law enforcement agencies.

"It's a very fundamental and reasonable question, and if they can't answer that question, then that raises some serious questions as to whether they were there to maintain the peace or to instigate."

For part of Tuesday, federal officers were protecting the federal courthouse in the 300 block of W. First Street downtown, where protesters had gathered to denounce the draft Supreme Court opinion.

About 7:30 p.m., protesters moved from the courthouse toward Pershing Square — a shift LAPD officials said they discussed in advance with organizers of the protest and helped to facilitate by blocking traffic. Speeches were given in both locations.

Organizers declared the march over about 8:30 p.m., and the crowd began dispersing. Up until that point, there had been "no incidents of note," the LAPD said.

The FPS officers were at the intersection of 5th and Hill streets by 8:40 p.m., when dozens of protesters were departing the park and spilling into the street. Some began banging on the hoods and trunks of the FPS officers' cars.

Videos of the scene posted to social media, as well as statements from the LAPD and witnesses, show that LAPD officers took a more forceful stance after the FPS officers squared off with protesters. That, in turn, quickly escalated tensions further as protesters jeered at and taunted the officers and the officers screamed back, pushed people and hit them with their batons.

Videos posted online by Vishal Singh, who regularly chronicles protests in L.A., and other activists showed an FPS officer driving through a crowd of protesters into the intersection with the car's sirens blaring. Another FPS officer then stepped out of a second patrol car in the intersection with his baton drawn.

"Back up," the FPS officer said to protesters, a few dozen of whom can be seen in the video. The officer can then be seen shoving a protester backward after the person spoke to him.

"Back off," the officer said. "Don't do that, you understand me?"

More protesters moved forward at that point, yelling at the officer to back up.

Another video showed a different FPS officer moving through the same crowd, shoving people along the way to reach the side of the first officer and a few others, who had retreated a short distance toward a Metro bus in the street.

LAPD officers soon arrived in large numbers and a LAPD commander at the scene quickly declared the gathering unlawful. People were ordered to disperse and LAPD officers formed skirmish lines and began pushing through protesters to clear the street.

Amid the commotion, LAPD officers attempted to make at least one arrest. A video showed an officer chase and tackle one masked protester to the ground, but other protesters intervened, scuffling with officers as one swung at them with his baton.

Asked about that specific incident, video of which was posted to Twitter, LAPD officials said the officers "were attempting to effect the arrest of a vandalism suspect when people within the crowd attacked the officers and facilitated the suspect's escape."

They said the department has since launched a "use of force investigation related to the officer's actions" in the incident and, therefore, could not comment on it further.

The LAPD did not respond to questions about other videos showing officers knocking over a protester's wagon with a speaker in it, and officers pushing protesters in the street.

The situation quickly died down as protesters dispersed. A smaller crowd later roamed around downtown for a bit, causing minor damage to City Hall. The LAPD said it made no arrests.

After massive protests spiraled out of control in L.A. following George Floyd's murder by Minneapolis police in 2020, multiple reviews found shortcomings in how the LAPD had responded. Top LAPD officials later expressed regret, saying they had learned lessons about how to better handle protests and would in some instances diminish their presence in part to avoid unnecessary clashes.

For much of Tuesday's abortion rights protest, the LAPD had maintained a peripheral presence.

In response to questions about the presence of the federal officers Tuesday night, LAPD Chief Michel Moore said the agency is "working with our partners to ensure clear coordination" moving forward.

HEADLINE	05/05 China: holiday spending, travel tumble
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-sees-spending-travel-tumble-during-covid-hit-labour-day-holiday-2022-05-05/
GIST	<p>BEIJING, May 5 (Reuters) - Chinese travellers spent 43% less over the five-day Labour Day holiday that ended on Wednesday than a year earlier, government data showed, as tightening COVID-19 prevention measures being rolled out across the country hit consumption.</p> <p>The Ministry of Culture and Tourism said on Wednesday that Chinese domestic travel revenue tumbled to 64.7 billion yuan (\$9.78 billion), and the 160 million trips made over the holiday marked a 30.2% year-on-year decrease.</p> <p>The Labour Day holiday from April 30 to May 4 is traditionally one of China's busiest tourist seasons as spring moves into summer but it was disrupted this year by efforts to fight China's largest COVID outbreak since the virus emerged in Wuhan in late 2019.</p> <p>Reuters reported last week that hotels across the country had slashed prices by up to 50%, with room rates in many Chinese cities hitting a five-year low for the holiday period as hotels braced for a fall in travellers.</p> <p>The Ministry of Culture and Tourism attributed the drop to COVID prevention and control policies affecting urban and rural residents nationwide.</p> <p>It also said that tourist traffic was weak across popular domestic destinations including tropical Hainan Island, Jiuzhaigou National Park and West Lake in the city of Hangzhou, which all reported large falls in visitor numbers.</p> <p>The hotel occupancy rate in Sanya, a destination on Hainan Island popular for its duty-free shopping, was just 20.6% during the holiday, ministry data showed.</p> <p>Five-day box office takings of 297 million yuan during the holiday were the lowest of recent years, and down sharply from last year's 1.67 billion yuan, the online ticket platform Dengta, backed by Alibaba, showed.</p> <p>Dozens of cities across China have imposed full or partial lockdowns to combat the spread of COVID-19, including Shanghai, the country's most populous city.</p> <p>Beijing, the capital, has also imposed movement curbs and shut many leisure and tourist venues including the city's Universal Studios resort.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/06 Kremlin: Victory Day Mariupol will come
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/kremlin-says-time-celebrating-victory-day-mariupol-will-come-2022-05-06/
GIST	<p>May 6 (Reuters) - The Kremlin said on Friday it did not know whether there would be a parade in Mariupol on May 9 to commemorate the Soviet Union's victory in World War Two, but that the time for celebrating Victory Day there would come.</p> <p>Russian forces say they have captured Mariupol despite ongoing resistance from Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region city's Azovstal steel plant.</p> <p>"The time will come to mark Victory Day in Mariupol," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters in a briefing on Friday, when asked about plans for May 9 in territory recently seized by Russian-backed forces.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Covid spread baffles locked-down Shanghai
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/china/how-did-we-catch-it-spread-covid-baffles-locked-down-shanghai-residents-2022-05-05/
GIST	<p>SHANGHAI, May 6 (Reuters) - Veronica thought she did everything right by sticking to all of the COVID-19 lockdown rules in the Chinese city of Shanghai.</p> <p>After the entire city was shut down on April 1, her family of four scrupulously followed government orders to stay at home, stepping out the front door only for mandatory PCR testing.</p> <p>When curbs were relaxed slightly in mid-April, letting residents walk about within their compounds, Veronica and her neighbours all wore masks.</p> <p>For weeks, their housing estate was free of COVID.</p> <p>But in late April, after what Veronica thinks was her 12th PCR test, she, another member of her family, and a handful of neighbours tested positive.</p> <p>"I have no idea how we caught it," said Veronica, who declined to give her full name, citing privacy.</p> <p>Her building was declared "sealed". She, her family and the others who tested positive were sent into quarantine. Everyone else was ordered back indoors for another 14 days.</p> <p>"I followed all the rules," Veronica said from a quarantine centre where she and her family are confined with hundreds of people in a vast hall.</p> <p>Veronica is among thousands who have caught COVID in compounds that had been free of the coronavirus and sealed off for weeks.</p> <p>The cases underscore how difficult it is to stop the spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant as China clings to its zero-COVID policy, perpetuating a cycle of lockdowns, as well as bafflement, anguish and anger.</p> <p>Between April 21 and May 2, residents at 4,836 different addresses found themselves in a similar situation, with infections cropping up after weeks in the clear, according to a Reuters examination of Shanghai government data.</p> <p>On April 30 alone, 471 addresses were recorded as having found at least one case, after registering none at all in the previous 29 days. The number of residents at a given address varied from a handful to hundreds.</p> <p>Shanghai's lockdown measures have been extremely strict, especially during the first two weeks of April, with residents allowed out of compounds only for exceptional reasons, such as a medical emergency. Many are not even allowed out of their front doors to mingle with neighbours.</p> <p>Shanghai's daily case numbers have come down for six straight days but the thousands of new ones still being found every day drive speculation about how COVID is spreading, debate over the wisdom of the "zero-COVID" policy and fear of infection.</p> <p>Searching for answers, many residents point to queuing for the all-too frequent PCR tests, or deliveries of food and other items, which all rely on volunteers, property management staff and couriers.</p> <p>Some people have even begun to refuse PCR tests, bringing penalties for failure to comply.</p> <p>The Shanghai government, asked for comment, referred to remarks on April 14 by city health official Wu Huanyu, who said that infection through the distribution of supplies could not be ruled out, among other possibilities.</p>

	<p>Health experts say the relentless spread points to China's difficulty in sticking to its zero-COVID goal.</p> <p>"Their zero COVID policy works to a point but then they will keep getting hit hard, especially when they haven't used that time to get high coverage of their most vulnerable population," said Paul Hunter, professor of medicine at the University of East Anglia, referring to China's relatively low rates of vaccination compared with other places.</p> <p>Jaya Dantas, a public health expert at the Curtin School of Population Health in Australia, said China's approach had come with high costs, and to stamp out transmission completely would take months.</p> <p>"They have been effective but really harsh with constant testing which is resource, labour and financially intensive. The mental health impacts on the population are also significant," she said.</p> <p>Lockdowns in Shanghai and dozens of other cities have triggered rare public shows of discontent, especially as the persistent emergence of a relatively few infections prolongs the confinement of millions of others.</p> <p>Each new case has multiple consequences: the COVID positive person and their close contacts must go into quarantine. All neighbours in their building must isolate for 14 days, with the clock resetting every time a new case is found.</p> <p>Veronica says she has been scarred by the experience.</p> <p>"Don't leave your apartment, but I don't even know if that helps anymore," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/06 EU tweaks Russia oil sanctions plan
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-tweaks-russia-oil-sanctions-plan-bid-win-over-reluctant-states-source-2022-05-06/
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS, May 6 (Reuters) - The European Commission has proposed changes to its planned embargo on Russian oil in a bid to win over reluctant states, three EU sources told Reuters on Friday.</p> <p>The tweaked proposal, which EU envoys were discussing at a meeting on Friday morning, includes giving Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic more time to adapt to the embargo, and help with upgrading their own oil infrastructure, the sources said.</p> <p>It also includes a three-month transition before banning EU shipping services from transporting Russian oil, instead of the initial one month, one of the sources added. They all spoke on condition of anonymity.</p> <p>The European Union's executive proposed the oil embargo on Wednesday as part of a wider package of EU sanctions on Russia - the sixth since Moscow invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24 in what the Kremlin calls "a special military operation".</p> <p>Under the changes, Hungary and Slovakia would be able to buy Russian oil from pipelines until the end of 2024, and the Czech Republic could continue until June 2024, if it does not get oil via a pipeline from southern Europe earlier, the sources said.</p> <p>Under the original proposal, most EU countries would have to stop buying Russian crude oil six months after adoption of the measures, and halt imports of refined oil products from Russia by the end of the year. Hungary and Slovakia were initially given until the end of 2023 to adapt.</p> <p>Bulgaria had also asked for exemptions, but was not offered concessions on deadlines, "because they don't have a real point," one official said. The other three countries who were granted more leeway "have an objective problem," the official added.</p>

	<p>One of the sources said that the extended deadlines were calculated on the likely construction times for pipeline upgrades. The official said Hungary and Slovakia accounted for only 6% of EU's oil imports from Russia, and the exemptions would not change the impact of the ban on the Russian economy.</p> <p>Diplomats said talks were complex and it was not clear whether the new proposal would get the backing of all 27 EU states, which is needed for the oil ban to take effect.</p> <p>Top EU diplomat Josep Borrell said on Friday he would call an extraordinary meeting of EU foreign affairs ministers next week if no deal was reached by the weekend.</p> <p>Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, said earlier on Friday that Hungary would need five years and huge investments in its refineries and pipelines to transform its current system which gets about 65% of its oil from Russia.</p> <p>The proposed extension of the period to introduce a shipping ban for EU companies to transport Russian oil worldwide is meant to address concerns raised by Greece, Malta and Cyprus about the impact of the measure on their shipping companies, one official said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 DOJ: new Office of Environmental Justice
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/merrick-garland-justice-department-environment/2022/05/05/id/1068682/
GIST	<p>The Justice Department will establish a new office to deal with issues of environmental justice, Attorney General Merrick Garland announced Thursday.</p> <p>According to Garland, the Office of Environmental Justice "will serve as the central hub for our efforts to advance our comprehensive environmental justice enforcement strategy," and will coordinate with agencies in other departments such as the Civil Rights Division and the offices of United States Attorneys, in order to "prioritize meaningful and constructive engagement with the communities most affected by environmental crime and injustice."</p> <p>Garland said, "In our environmental enforcement efforts, we will prioritize the cases that will have the greatest impact on the communities most overburdened by environmental harm."</p> <p>He went on to add that "communities of color, indigenous communities, and low-income communities often bear the brunt of the harm caused by environmental crime, pollution and climate change."</p> <p>A recent "State of the Air" report from the American Lung Association found "that the burden of living with unhealthy air is not shared equally. Close to 19.8 million people live in the 14 counties that failed all three measures. Of those, 14.1 million are people of color. People of color were 61% more likely than white people to live in a county with a failing grade for at least one pollutant, and 3.6 times as likely to live in a county with failing grades for all three pollutants."</p> <p>The OEJ will be led by attorney Cynthia Ferguson, who previously worked in the Environmental Enforcement Section of the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Russians steal Ukraine farm equipment
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/russia-ukraine-supply-chain-economy/2022/05/05/id/1068683/
GIST	<p>Multiple sources told CNN on Thursday that Russia has stolen a vast amount of farm equipment and grain in occupied Ukrainian areas, a practice that threatens to amplify shortages in the world food supply.</p> <p>The Kremlin forces are also actively targeting Ukrainian food storage sites with artillery as they tighten their grip on the agricultural regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in southern Ukraine, the sources said.</p>

	<p>Ukrainian Deputy Agricultural Minister Taras Vysotsky told Ukrayinska Pravda that "about 1.3 million tons of grain were left in the temporarily occupied territories."</p> <p>"These are, first of all, needed to ensure daily food security and the nutrition of Ukrainians living there, and the necessary spring fieldwork in terms of spring crops. There were no strategic reserves there ..."</p> <p>"We already have confirmation from each region — Zaporizhia region, Kherson region, Donetsk, Luhansk, from each of about 100 thousand tons of grain has been exported."</p> <p>The news comes several weeks after Russian soldiers removed 1,500 tons of grain from storage units in the Kherson village of Mala Lepetykha, dumping them in the Dnieper River, according to CNN.</p> <p>The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said in a written statement in late April that it "strongly condemns the criminal actions of the Russian Federation in the so-called expropriation of crops from farmers in the Kherson region," Reuters reported.</p> <p>"The looting of grain from the Kherson region, as well as the blocking of shipments from Ukrainian ports and the mining of shipping lanes, threaten the world's food security," the ministry continued. "We demand that Russia stop the illegal theft of grain, unblock Ukrainian ports, restore freedom of navigation and allow the passage of merchant ships."</p> <p>When asked by Reuters if Russia could verify Ukraine's accusations, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said, "No. We do not know where this information comes from."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Protesters plan march on Justices' homes
SOURCE	https://nypost.com/2022/05/05/supreme-court-surrounded-by-fence-after-roe-v-wade-protests/
GIST	<p>Militant pro-choice activists doxxed the six Supreme Court justices that are expected to dismiss Roe v. Wade — publishing their partial addresses online as part of a planned protest.</p> <p>Heated protests outside the courthouse in Washington, DC continued Thursday, with 8-foot non-scalable fences erected late Wednesday ahead of the crowds, similar to the ones set up after the Jan. 6 Capitol riot.</p> <p>The heightened security followed three days of tense protests that started just moments after the publication of a leaked draft opinion suggesting SCOTUS was poised to dismiss the landmark 1973 decision that legalized abortion nationwide.</p> <p>At least one activist group is already planning a more direct attack — taking the protest direct to the homes of the six justices expected to dismiss the long-divisive federal right.</p> <p>The group, “Ruth Sent Us,” has planned the protest for next Wednesday at what it called “the homes of the six extremist justices.”</p> <p>It even included a map pinpointing homes — three in Virginia and three in Maryland — “where the six Christian fundamentalist Justices issue their shadow docket rulings from.”</p> <p>It listed streets that are allegedly the homes of Samuel Alito, who authored the draft, as well as Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, Amy Barrett and Chief Justice John Roberts.</p> <p>“Our 6-3 extremist Supreme Court routinely issues rulings that hurt women, racial minorities, LGBTQ+ and immigrant rights. We must rise up to force accountability using a diversity of tactics,” the group said.</p> <p>The group also has action planned for Mother’s Day on Sunday — telling followers to descend on Catholic churches in protest “that six extremist Catholics set out to overturn Roe.”</p>

	<p>“Ruth Sent Us” promoted the so-called “Mother’s Day Strike” with a video of church-goers trying to kick out protesters who interrupted a service, chanting, “Without this basic right, women can’t be free — abortion on demand and without apology.”</p> <p>The group’s moniker was inspired by late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg — seemingly ignoring the fact that she was a vocal critic of the landmark ruling.</p> <p>While a staunch advocate for women’s access to abortion, Ginsburg criticized Roe v. Wade as too far-reaching and sweeping, making it too easy a target for anti-abortion campaigners.</p> <p>Still, the “Ruth Sent Us” group said its inspiration was how “Ruth Bader Ginsburg spent her entire life moving the needle towards justice for all,” also highlighting Black Lives Matter.</p> <p>“We intend to stop the corruption of our Supreme Court, and stop the spread of fascist laws,” the group said. “Instead of waiting for the extremist Court to strip our rights further, we must rise up now.”</p> <p>Chief Justice Roberts on Tuesday confirmed that the leaked draft — published Monday night by Politico — was genuine, but stressed that “it does not represent a decision by the Court or the final position of any member on the issues in the case.”</p> <p>The US Capitol Police confirmed to Fox 5 that the fence was part of multi-agency efforts to “prepare for any potential demonstrations in the area of the Supreme Court, including adding additional officers in the area.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Officials: potential violence DC, nationwide
SOURCE	https://www.wral.com/law-enforcement-officials-warn-of-potential-violence-in-dc-and-nationwide-in-wake-of-supreme-court-draft-opinion/20267994/
GIST	<p>CNN — Law enforcement officials in Washington, DC, are bracing for potential security risks posed by reactions to the leaked draft Supreme Court majority opinion that would strike down Roe v. Wade.</p> <p>An alert generated Thursday by US Capitol Police and reviewed by CNN warned about far-right calls for violence against a religious group planning an upcoming protest in support of abortion rights at the court.</p> <p>Late Wednesday night, teams began installing an 8-foot-tall, non-scalable fence around parts of the Supreme Court building, and Thursday night, crews set up concrete Jersey barriers blocking the street in front of the court -- a sign that officials are worried that protests, which have so far been peaceful, could turn less so.</p> <p>Law enforcement officials from the National Fusion Center Association hosted a call Wednesday with roughly 150 participants to alert state and local partners about demonstrations nationwide that have resulted in some physical confrontations, other possible demonstrations and the uptick of social media chatter, according to sources familiar with the call.</p> <p>The call, first reported by Politico, highlights the proactive effort and coordination among law enforcement nationwide following the US Capitol riot on January 6, 2021, which exposed how quickly social media chatter can morph into an attack.</p> <p>Multiple sources told CNN the recent developments could embolden violent extremists to engage in attacks or other criminal activity targeting abortion clinic staff, patients or clinic facilities.</p> <p>One law enforcement source added that government officials -- including the nine justices and their staffs - - or abortion-related advocacy groups and abortion-related First Amendment-protected events could be targets for violence.</p>

	<p>The source also said social media chatter against the justices and members of Congress is being tracked -- work that has become standard practice in an era of heightened use of social media to express extremist ideas.</p> <p>Concern about the justices' security is just the latest in an on-going conversation about how to protect members of the judiciary, who oversee high-profile, dangerous cases but lack individual security teams.</p> <p>CNN previously reported the watchdog for the US Marshals Service found in a June 2021 report that the agency "does not have the resources or proactive threat detection capabilities that the USMS has determined it needs to meet its protective service obligations for USMS-protected persons, including judges."</p> <p>The US Marshals Service protects roughly 2,700 judges nationwide, and notes that threats or inappropriate contacts have spiked in recent years. The inspector general report noted the agency responded to more than 4,200 threats in 2020, up 81% from 2016.</p> <p>The DC Metropolitan Police Department and US Capitol Police have added officers to the area since the leaked opinion surfaced.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Hiring hard enough, new workers 'ghosting'
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/job-ghosting-new-hires-employment-11651759368?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos3
GIST	<p>Enervise Inc. recently found someone to fill a \$75,000-a-year job. The new hire said he would move to Cincinnati and report to orientation at 8 a.m. on his first Monday. The day before, he emailed to say he had changed his mind.</p> <p>Taken aback, Aaron Dorfman, the recruiting manager for the facility-services and plumbing company, emailed back. No response. "I called, too, and it was just crickets," he said.</p> <p>Add another head-scratching new feature to the post-Covid employment landscape: A job isn't filled until the new hire actually shows up for work.</p> <p>Manufacturers, restaurants, airlines and cleaning companies are among the employers seeing a surge of job seekers who accept positions—and are neither seen nor heard from again. Southwest Airlines Co. said some 15% to 20% of new hires for some jobs don't turn up on their first day. At security and facility-services provider Allied Universal, roughly 15% of new hires disappear before starting a job.</p> <p>The practice, often called ghosting, isn't new. In the tight labor market that preceded the pandemic, employers reported that some staffers quit without giving notice or just stopped showing up for their shifts. The practice picked up its own shorthand: "no call, no show."</p> <p>What is different now, employers said, is that more people are vanishing before even starting a job.</p> <p>"The incidence of so-called ghosting—of accepting offers and then saying that they'll start and not showing up—is at a record high," said Jonas Prising, chairman and CEO of staffing agency ManpowerGroup Inc. "It's multiples of what we've ever seen in other tight labor market cycles."</p> <p>Nationally, the job market is the strongest it has been in about a half-century. The unemployment rate fell to 3.6% in March, and job openings and the number of times workers quit reached the highest levels on record. By some measures the odds of getting laid off are the lowest in decades. Many companies streamlined hiring processes or improved technology, at times making it possible for people to get hired online within minutes—and without ever speaking to a hiring manager.</p>

The rise in no-shows “could be just an expression of job seekers having a lot more confidence in their ability to find a job,” said Nick Bunker, an economist at the job-search platform Indeed.

In posts on Twitter, workers offered all sorts of reasons for blowing off new jobs. They said they got better offers between when they were hired and when they were supposed to show up. They claimed they discovered the pay was lower or the hours or conditions different than what they were told. Some even complained that the hiring companies had previously ignored them after interviews or applications.

When hiring for clients, recruiting firm Murray Resources in Houston has seen candidates not show up for interviews and start dates. “Candidates have so many options in this market that typical professional etiquette is being ignored,” said Keith Wolf, a managing director, who said even his own firm has run into such hiring problems.

“We have a generation of professionals who grew up on dating apps, where ghosting has been accepted as an annoying, but common, phenomenon,” he said. “I believe that is leaking into the professional world.”

Home-cleaning business Duster & Daisy Green Clean Service in Corpus Christi, Texas, has been trying to hire another five cleaners. But getting new recruits to show up even for a few paid training sessions has been a struggle, said manager Sunny Zhang.

Sometimes job seekers sign on and almost immediately stop answering text messages about where to go for training. Others show up for one or two shifts, then disappear without picking up their paychecks. About 80% of new hires eventually disappear without notice, Ms. Zhang said.

About two months ago, after it happened again, she reached a breaking point. “I was so mad,” she said. She updated the company’s online job listings to say: “Please apply if you are a serious JOB SEEKER. No job ghosting.” Even that, she said, hasn’t helped.

At Allied Universal, which employs about 300,000 in the U.S., around 18% of new security and facility-services hires failed show up in the early days of the pandemic. That number has inched down to just below 15%, said Don Tefft, Jr., the company’s global head of human resources, “but we’re still not back to what I would call prepandemic levels” of about 8%.

After a seeing an uptick in the number of candidates who decline its offers, technology company NetApp Inc. has streamlined its hiring processes and cut the number of interviews for some jobs. The idea, said chief human resources officer Debra McCowan, is to speed up the process for applicants. “More than ever, talent has choice,” she said.

Stella Pomianek and her husband, Mariusz, owners of Cafe Stella, struggle to keep their Norfolk, Va., restaurant fully staffed. “We have lots of applicants to choose from,” she said. “I let them set up the time for the interview, and then 20% show up for the interview. The other 80% don’t even call me.”

Some new hires skip shifts, often without calling, the Pomianeks said. But they are reluctant to fire the no-shows given the challenge of replacing anyone. “Eventually they just stop showing up and we have no choice,” said Mr. Pomianek.

“We used to take it very personally,” he said. “We thought it was about us. Then we started talking to other business owners, and they said they’re dealing with the same thing.”

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HEADLINE	05/05 Millions retired, many return to work
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/05/05/retirement-jobs-work-inflation-medicare/
GIST	Millions of older Americans stopped working during the pandemic, far more than usual, stoking fears that the workforce had been permanently altered, but the country is close to closing the gap in early retirements, according to new data.

An estimated 1.5 million retirees have reentered the U.S. labor market over the past year, according to an analysis of Labor Department data by Nick Bunker, an economist at Indeed. That means the economy has made up most of the extra losses of retirees since February 2020, a Washington Post analysis shows.

Many retirees are being pulled back to jobs by a combination of diminishing covid concerns and more flexible work arrangements at a time when employers are desperate for workers. In some cases, workers say rising costs — and the inability to keep up while on a fixed income — are factoring heavily into their decisions as well.

The April jobs report to be released Friday is expected to show more workers, generally, rejoining the labor market, but the strong return of retirees is considered somewhat unexpected and even fortunate considering the record 11.5 million job openings in March.

Jerry Munoz recently returned to full-time work at a pharmaceutical company in San Diego after a decade of retirement. He'd gotten antsy staying home during the pandemic and said he felt safe going back into the office after receiving the coronavirus vaccine and booster. The extra pay from his new position as a safety consultant has been helpful, too: He and his wife recently bought an investment home with the money.

"Covid made me think about a lot of things and I felt like I was wasting my skills and my knowledge," the 64-year-old said. "I told my wife that as long as I'm healthy enough, I'll probably work another two years."

Roughly 2.4 million additional Americans retired in the 18 months of the pandemic than expected, making up the majority of the 4.2 million people who left the labor force between March 2020 and July 2021, according to Miguel Faria-e-Castro, a senior economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

The percentage of retirees returning to work has picked up momentum in recent months, hitting a pandemic high of 3.2 percent in March, according to Indeed. In interviews with nearly a dozen workers who recently "un-retired," many said they felt comfortable returning to work now that they've gotten the coronavirus vaccine and booster shots. Almost all said they'd taken on jobs that were more accommodating of their needs, whether that meant being able to work remotely, travel less or set their own hours.

"This is primarily a story of a tight labor market," said Bunker of Indeed, who added that there was a similar rebound in people returning from retirement after the Great Recession. "For so much of last year, the big question in the labor market was: Where are all the workers? This year we're seeing that they're coming back."

The bounce back comes as U.S. employers continue to complain of widespread labor shortages, with twice as many available positions as there are unemployed Americans, according to the Labor Department. As a result, employers are having to go to greater lengths to attract and keep workers of all ages.

More employers are specifically recruiting retirees by posting jobs at senior centers and churches, as well as websites such as Retirementjobs.com and Workforce50.com aimed at older Americans. Many are also more willing to offer accommodations such as part-time or remote work, according to Amanda Cage, president of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions.

"This is the first time I've seen retirees become a targeted population," she said. "It's very different from what we saw in the last recession, when older workers faced extreme discrimination in the labor market in a way that they never quite recovered from."

Robert Blethen, a retired truck driver in Connecticut, wasn't exactly looking to work again. But the 70-year-old was lured back last fall when he got a call asking if he'd be willing to drive nine horses from Oklahoma to Maine.

That two-day gig turned into part-time work and eventually, full-time employment for a small trucking company. Now he's on the road 72 hours a week shuttling livestock to and from Florida. Blethen, who receives about \$2,800 a month in Social Security, says the extra money has helped cover home improvement costs, including a new heating system, garage doors and window installations.

"I was kind of bored, and the company was short of help," said Blethen, who has been working since he was 12. "Plus I'm being compensated very well."

Although it's clear that people are reentering the workforce at higher rates, it's less clear exactly what sorts of jobs they're getting — or how much of their decisions are voluntary, said Beth Truesdale, an expert in the aging workforce and inequality at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

"The privilege of being able to retire early or to return to work if you want to, is restricted to a tiny, tiny fraction of Americans," Truesdale said. "People are making choices under very constrained circumstances. ... In many cases, it isn't a choice to work longer so much as having to work longer to make ends meet."

Roblyn Melton, 58, a retired educator in Farmington, Mo., recently took a full-time job as a curriculum consultant because of astronomical health insurance premiums, which at \$1,200 a month, were double her mortgage. She plans to work for another seven years until she's eligible for Medicare.

"Basically I went back to work because of health insurance," said Melton, who was retired for three years. "But I did pick a job that I enjoyed doing, so it's not like I went back to do something I hate."

Leaving the workforce early can be both a result and driver of inequality, economists say. More vulnerable older workers — in lower-wage jobs without college degrees — were most likely to stop working prematurely during the pandemic, while more privileged Americans tended to delay retirement, according to The New School's Retirement Equity Lab. The share of Black workers without a college degree who stopped working before age 65 increased the most.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, an awful lot of older people were pushed out of jobs or left because of high health risks," Truesdale said. "What does it mean to retire under those circumstances? It can be very complicated."

Determining exactly who is "retired" versus simply out of work can also be tricky, she said. Many people who leave the labor force in their 50s and early 60s do so because of health concerns or caregiving responsibilities, both of which were amplified early in the covid crisis. Others may leave early because of employee buyouts or early retirement packages, which tend to target the oldest workers.

Early in the pandemic, Scott Ward, then 57, took an early retirement offer from his job at a global tech firm in Silicon Valley. He wasn't quite ready to stop working, but he said he had gotten tired of frequent international travel. With little else to do after leaving his job, the former human resources director signed up for virtual acting classes.

Now he's reentered the workforce in two ways: as an HR manager at a small firm that requires much less travel, and as an actor in horror movies and romantic comedies. He has several gigs lined up this year, including one as a deputy sheriff in a werewolf movie and another as a lead in a fantasy adventure.

"I was kind of concerned that it would be hard to get back to work because of my age," said Ward, 59. "But given the market right now, it was easy."

Workers between the ages of 55 and 64 — who don't tend to qualify for Medicare or full Social Security benefits — are among those most likely to return to the workforce, said Owen Davis, a research associate at the New School's Schwartz Center for Economic Policy Analysis.

	<p>“Retirement is influenced by your wealth, your health and your job prospects — and those things can either move in the same direction, or they can all push in different ways,” he said.</p> <p>Connie Kitchens retired in 2018 after three decades working in Georgia public schools, most recently as a middle school teacher. But now the 61-year-old says she’ll likely have to return to work, at least part-time, so her family can keep up with rising costs for food and health care.</p> <p>She and her husband, a retired law enforcement officer, are raising two young grandchildren after their daughter died of breast cancer. They receive about \$10,000 in Social Security and pensions every month, before taxes, although she said that’s not enough to live on for a family of four. They stopped going to restaurants and have cut back on weekend trips to visit family. Her monthly grocery bill has gone from \$300 to nearly \$600, in part because her grandson, who has sickle cell anemia, requires specialty items like Pediasure and lactose-free milk, often in short supply.</p> <p>“The price of meat just shot all the way up — it’s so high that chicken costs as much as steak used to,” said Kitchens, who has been mulling a return to work but needs flexibility for her grandson’s medical appointments. “I have to find the right job, with flexibility. This isn’t what I dreamed it was going to be when I retired.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 SPD tests brain simulation headband
SOURCE	https://www.geekwire.com/2022/seattle-police-department-testing-brain-stimulation-headband-as-part-of-wellness-research-effort/
GIST	<p>A headband that emits electrical current is being tested in a study of people with depression at the Seattle Police Department, in collaboration with researchers at Washington State University.</p> <p>The study is part of a larger effort to promote wellness among department employees and to assess new ways of improving mental health.</p> <p>“There is a group of people that select into law enforcement that don’t generally think twice about risking their safety for somebody else, but they often have a difficult time taking care of themselves, or accessing self-care,” Loren Atherly, director of performance analytics and research at SPD, told GeekWire.</p> <p>SPD has a longstanding program to improve mental health of its employees through peer support and other traditional measures. But it also investigates new ways to provide psychological support.</p> <p>Though the study is short term and is not designed to assess persistence of any effects, Atherly said that “as an effort to normalize access to self-care, this project is already a success.”</p> <p>SPD is operating under stress exacerbated by low staffing in the wake of recent budget cuts and employee attrition after the protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd, said WSU researcher Lois James, principal investigator of the study and an associate professor in the college of nursing.</p> <p>Supporting the mental health of officers benefits the community, said Atherly.</p> <p>“Healthy employees are best equipped to serve our community. Any opportunity to remind people of the importance of health and wellness reinforces that ethos,” he said.</p> <p>Old technique, little data</p> <p>The new study will test a device made by Fisher Wallace Laboratories, a 15 year-old New York City-based company sponsoring the study. The device uses a technology called cranial electrotherapy stimulation (CES) to deliver an electric current to the temples.</p>

It's an old technique: the first CES device, called the Somniatron, was invented in the Soviet Union in the early part of the 1900s.

Fisher Wallace and other companies sell thousands of such devices each year to treat conditions ranging from anxiety to insomnia and depression.

But despite their longstanding use, little is known about how CES devices work.

Brain imaging studies suggest they could affect neural activity, and some people think they may affect projections of the the vagus nerve, providing calming signals to the heart, gut and other body systems. There is also little known about CES effectiveness, particularly for depression, according to a recent review of the field.

One study of the Fisher Wallace device showed that it reduced depressive symptoms, and another showed no effect on depression compared to a control group. But both studies involved only small numbers of subjects and evaluated them for only a few weeks.

"Clinical trials using this particular device are unimpressive," Andrew Ko, a neurosurgeon and associate professor in the department of neurological surgery at the University of Washington, said in an email. Many initially promising therapies for depression, especially involving brain stimulation, succeed in pilot studies but fail upon further testing, said Ko.

"Other CES devices exist, and systematic reviews generally conclude there is insufficient evidence to support effectiveness," added Ko, who is not involved in the SPD study. "This is not to say that this therapy cannot not work, or that it is a bad idea to test these devices on a wider scale. In fact, doing so in a real-world situation is probably a good thing."

The new study is designed to overcome some of the limitations of previous studies, aiming for large study group with a high mental health burden. Researchers are aiming to enroll 200 police department employees with mild to moderate depression, including first responders.

Police officers have "very high rates of chronic fatigue, excessive daytime sleepiness, and they also have very high rates of anxiety and depression and PTSD. It's a population that I think is desperately in need of interventions like this," James said.

James is a research advisor for the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and is also working with SPD on a study assessing the effect of short e-learning modules on sleep and fatigue.

Activate the electrodes

The department has already enrolled more 50 people in the new study since it launched in February. People are treated with the device for eight weeks, and half initially receive a sham device for two weeks, as a control. Participants' symptoms are evaluated by a physician at telehealth appointments before starting the study and at four weeks, and at other times by self-reporting.

In addition researchers will measure fatigue with a FitBit or other device. The care team is providing access to a device made by a Vancouver, B.C. company, Fatigue Science. The company's REDIband, worn around the wrist, tracks movement and sleep and the accompanying software tracks fatigue and predicts mental performance and reaction times.

Researchers will also track adverse effects. One of the previous studies testing the Fisher-Wallace device for depression showed an association with poor concentration and malaise, but another showed no increase in side effects in the treated population. One survey estimated that side effects like vertigo and headaches occur about 1% of the time.

The technique “is fairly cheap and seems safe,” said Ko. He notes, however, that the SPD study is limited by its short duration, so whether the device can have an effect long term will remain unknown.

Moreover, in other brain stimulation studies for psychiatric diseases, patients can experience a withdrawal effect. That risk is mitigated by the study’s screening of patients for depression and psychiatric conditions, but the protocol could have been strengthened with a specific plan for patients to continue with the device as part of the study if it is helping them, said Ko.

Fisher Wallace aims to submit data from its study to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration this December. The FDA has allowed the sale of Fisher Wallace and other CES devices for years but is now asking companies to submit clinical trial data to support their use. And for depression, the FDA is now requiring a formal approval process.

The company has submitted data to the FDA on a separate study for for anxiety that it said showed an effect, according to a spokesperson.

The headband is currently available on the Fisher Wallace website for \$499 and the company makes no other products. It pulled in \$4.3 million in revenue last year and has raised in \$2.5 million in venture funding and \$6.3 million in “equity crowdfunding,” according to a spokesperson. People can invest in the company via a link on its website to the crowdfunding site StartEngine.

The study could also pave the way for future research at SPD.

“This is our first approach in a suite of research projects that we’re calling practical wellness research,” said Atherly, who has used the Fisher Wallace device himself. SPD has no financial interest in the company. “We’re open and receptive to other projects that might help support people’s behavior and well-being.”

Atherly was hired to focus on department analytics and data as part of the 2012 federal “consent decree” designed to reform the department. His four-member team also works with researchers studying criminology, criminal justice and psychology.

“The promise of the consent decree is to build a police department that is able to engage evidence-based decision-making on a pretty agile basis, and where we don’t have evidence for those kind of things, begin to move the science forward and discover more,” said Atherly.

Added Atherly: “Another component of this is also just normalizing accessing self-care technologies.”

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HEADLINE	05/05 Reports: SPD hampered L&I investigation
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/seattle-police-city-officials-met-wa-inspectors-with-suspicion-during-mask-compliance-investigations-reports-say/
GIST	<p>A pair of investigations by the Washington Department of Labor and Industries into widespread refusal by Seattle police officers to comply with mask mandates during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic were hampered by incidents of open suspicion and stubbornness by officers and their commanders, according to inspection reports.</p> <p>Copies of the reports obtained by The Seattle Times, issued in January and July 2021, point to numerous instances when officers failed to wear protective masks or maintain social distancing, resulting in a sharply critical Office of Inspector General review issued last month.</p> <p>The inspector general, one of three civilian watchdog agencies that monitors Seattle Police Department operations, concluded officers violated the law by failing to wear masks and observe social distancing — and that the department’s command staff failed to make them comply.</p>

The state safety and health inspection reports cite instances when SPD officials “refused to answer questions” during inspections and barred compliance and safety officers from accessing SPD facilities — even after the inspections were approved by a lieutenant and inspectors showed their government identification.

The July report said police officials “claimed they had never heard” of the state Department of Labor and Industries or its occupational safety and health division.

The same report said credentialed inspectors were denied access to Seattle police’s West Precinct in April 2021 “due to concerns that [the precinct] housed Criminal Justice Information Systems.”

“Employer refused and/or was unable to answer questions regarding their masking, social distancing and meal time policies,” the report said. “They also would not provide information on how frequently the desks in the report writing area or gym were used,” and refused the inspectors’ request to interview officers during the inspection.

During the walkaround, “The employer could not or would not answer questions posed by the [safety and health inspectors] regarding general disinfection of the shared work areas and decontamination of uniforms, shared equipment employee dining practices” or “general COVID-19 policies,” the report said.

As noted in last month’s OIG report, all attempts by the L&I inspectors to interview officers failed.

When L&I identified six random officers from a list of 86 officers who were involved in the 2021 May Day protests — where a number of the mask and distancing violations allegedly occurred — five of the officers took furlough days when they were scheduled to be interviewed and the sixth declined to talk.

It took Seattle police and the City Attorney’s Office more than a month to provide the list of officers, according to the documents.

The L&I investigation was prompted by citizen complaints, some of which included detailed observations and photographs of police officers, on and off duty, not wearing masks or observing health department recommendations that individuals remain at least 6 feet from one another.

L&I inspectors showed those photographs to SPD officials, including SPD legal counsel Rebecca Boatright, who stated “they appeared to be SPD officers, but she could not speak to how close together they were,” according to the inspection report.

Boatright said in an email Wednesday the L&I visit was unscheduled and that Seattle police “sought to provide the information requested and the access it was able” while balancing security protocols and requirements and without disrupting the 911 call center, which is housed in the West Precinct.

L&I eventually received the information it sought, and Boatright said SPD “appropriately declined to speculate on specific terms without opportunity to review the specific language of the policy.”

The OIG report cited incidents when officers routinely disobeyed direct orders from interim police Chief Adrian Diaz to wear masks and observe social distancing protocols.

Former Office of Police Accountability Director Andrew Myerberg concluded the refusals indicated a “serious culture issue within the SPD” that could be seen at all levels of the department, including among members of the command staff, some of whom also disobeyed masking orders.

Boatright noted that mask mandates “were met with varying levels of support” throughout society.

“The fact remains that SPD officers continued to respond on the front lines of the multiple crises confronting this City and did so with honor and integrity,” Boatright said. “I would submit to you that the

	<p>'culture' of this department is better reflected in the work that officers do day in, day out, to serve and protect the residents and visitors to this city."</p> <p>The initial L&I citation was issued in January 2021 after the agency received complaints about unmasked officers at SPD's Arson and Bomb Squad facility at 2203 Airport Way S. The health and safety inspectors found a serious violation of state and city masking and social distancing regulations and fined the department \$5,400.</p> <p>The citation stated that SPD "did not provide a workplace free from recognized hazards that are causing, or are likely to cause, serious injury or death," citing the spread of COVID. The second citation, issued in June, carried a \$12,000 fine as a repeat violation following additional complaints, several from residents living close to the East Precinct on Capitol Hill.</p> <p>According to Tim Church, an assistant L&I director, the department paid a negotiated settlement of \$11,511 to settle the citations.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Skagit Co. 'substantial' transmission level
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/omicron-sub-variant-a-factor-in-skagit-countys-111-jump-in-covid-case-rate
GIST	<p>SKAGIT COUNTY, Wash. - COVID-19 cases are trending upward for a community in the North Sound. According to CDC guidelines, Skagit County is now in a "substantial" transmission level, up from a "moderate" level last week.</p> <p>Skagit County's COVID-19 case rate jumped 111% in the last week. The latest numbers were recorded April 30 at 134.6 cases in a seven-day period, up from 62.9 the week prior.</p> <p>Danica Sessions with Skagit County Public Health said the uptick is concerning, but right now, case numbers are still relatively low.</p> <p>"At the height of omicron, we were seeing a seven-day rolling average of 260 cases per day. And right now we're sitting at 26. So yes, 111% seems very, very big, but we're looking at some small numbers," said Sessions. "That said, our hospitalization rate did go up by 50% this week, and we are actively tracking our hospitalization rates."</p> <p>New omicron subvariants—like BA.2.12.1, BA.4 and BA.5—are a factor in the increase seen not just in Skagit County. The Washington State Department of Health said it's seeing an increase in positive cases statewide.</p> <p>"We're talking about endemic, but we're not talking about over. COVID is still very much present in the community, and we will likely see surges, waves for a while to come," said Sessions.</p> <p>Health experts said vaccines offer the most effective protection against COVID-19, and help reduce a larger spike in cases. However, even with all the free vaccination clinics throughout Skagit County, less than 69% of eligible people are vaccinated.</p> <p>"[We're] really urging folks to come out, get vaccinated; if you haven't already, get boosted, and for some folks a second booster," said Sessions. "Continuing to have those hard conversations with people about the safety and efficacy of these vaccines and how important they are, even now."</p> <p>Sessions said the health department is also seeing a resurgence in testing.</p> <p>Z.D. just got back from a trip out of state. He was first in line to get a COVID test at Cascade Mall in Burlington this week to protect his loved ones.</p>

"I'm super close with the older people in my family, so I'm just making sure I'm staying safe, and I don't bring nothing to them," said Z.D. "I'm definitely aware of what it could do to our community, to our people. I'm definitely trying to do what I can to stay safe."

Skagit County Public Health is also giving away [free at-home test kits](#) for anyone who goes to the testing site at Cascade Mall.

Even though new variants keep popping up, DOH has its [WaForWArd](#) plan to continue COVID-19 response in the state. The plan includes helping local health jurisdictions with more data monitoring and more attempts to get vaccines into people's arms.

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HEADLINE	05/05 Report: most working parents burned out
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/05/well/family/parental-burnout-symptoms.html
GIST	<p>For two years, working parents in America have been running on fumes, hammered by the stress of remote schooling, day care closures, economic instability and social isolation.</p> <p>Now, a new report says that 66 percent of working parents meet the criteria for parental burnout — a nonclinical term that means they are so exhausted by the pressure of caring for their children, they feel they have nothing left to give.</p> <p>The report, published Thursday by researchers with Ohio State University, is based on an online survey of 1,285 working parents that was conducted between January 2021 and April 2021. It gives a snapshot of a different time, when America was deep in pandemic lockdowns.</p> <p>But its authors believe parental burnout is here to stay, because working parents don't have enough practical, structural supports to overcome the relentless stress, which isn't abating. Any parent can experience burnout, but the new report focuses on working parents, who, the researchers believe, are at particular risk for exhaustion.</p> <p>"Parental burnout isn't just going to end magically when the pandemic finally ends," said Bernadette Melnyk, dean of the College of Nursing at Ohio State and an author of the report. "The chronicity of the pandemic has taken a toll and depleted many parents' coping reserves that will take time and patience to build up again."</p> <p>What are the signs of parental burnout?</p> <p>Parental burnout isn't a clinical diagnosis that would end up in anyone's medical chart, but many psychologists recognize it as a subtype of burnout — a work-related phenomenon now recognized as a syndrome by the World Health Organization. (It is not included in the DSM-5, often called the "bible" of psychiatry in the United States.)</p> <p>"As with burnout, parental burnout is defined as physical, emotional and mental exhaustion due to the ongoing demands of caring for one's children," said Dr. Jennifer Yen, a psychiatrist at UTHealth Houston.</p> <p>Of course, raising children is demanding in all those ways, which makes it difficult to draw a clear line between normal periods of stress and burnout. Dr. Yen said parents should be on the lookout for signs like fatigue, irritability, changes in sleep, appetite and mood, or aches and pains. What sets parental burnout apart is how severe those symptoms are, as well as how much they affect daily functioning.</p> <p>"It's a state where you have been giving, and giving, and giving and giving — until you're totally empty," said Kate Kripke, a clinical social worker and the founder of the Postpartum Wellness Center in Boulder, Colo.</p> <p>Dr. Yen also noted other red flags that are specific to parental burnout, like feeling angry or resentful about having to care for your children, and starting to isolate from them physically or emotionally.</p>

Parents with burnout may also feel trapped or fantasize about leaving, she added.

Though the new report may be useful to clinicians, the researchers wrote it directly for working parents. It includes [a new burnout scale](#) they hope parents will use to gauge how they are doing, which includes 10 statements such as: “I wake up exhausted at the thought of another day with my children” or “I feel like I am in survival mode as a parent.” Parents can agree or disagree with each on a scale from “not at all” to “very much so.” They are then given a final score that can help indicate whether they have what the researchers would consider to be mild, moderate or severe burnout.

What to do about parental burnout

No matter where working parents fall on that spectrum, it may be helpful for them to first acknowledge that many of the challenges they’re facing are beyond their control. It is impossible to be a dedicated employee and a dedicated caregiver simultaneously without adequate support. Self-compassion is important, Dr. Melnyk said.

But parents facing mild burnout may be able to make immediate changes that will prevent more severe exhaustion. Find small ways to ask for help, the researchers say. If you are able, ask a family member or neighbor to pitch in with child care, even if it’s just to give you a short break. If you’re responsible for getting your children to and from school, activities and play dates, find others to car pool with so you aren’t running yourself ragged.

The report found that 68 percent of working moms say they’re burned out compared with 42 percent of working dads, so it may be especially important for women to take breaks and ask for help — though that may not be simple or easy.

Stressed-out parents may also find it helpful to tap into a sense of quiet and calm by practicing mindfulness. [Research shows](#) that mindfulness can help reduce parental stress, which may in turn help improve children’s psychological outcomes. It can be as simple as intentionally feeling the bottom of your foot on the floor and taking a deep breath, Ms. Kripke said.

But breathing alone won’t solve this. Parents with more serious burnout should reach out to a primary care practitioner or mental health provider immediately. They can screen for issues like anxiety and depression. (If you are [unsure how to find a mental health provider](#), it may be helpful to start by searching free online directories, like [Alma](#), [ZocDoc](#), [Monarch](#) or [Headway](#).)

Keep in mind that some mental health providers feel conflicted about the notion of parental burnout.

“This is the first I’m hearing of the term,” said Dr. Catherine Birndorf, the C.E.O. and medical director of the Motherhood Center in New York City. She said she likes the concept, and the idea of a parental burnout scale, if they help parents who wouldn’t otherwise recognize they are struggling. But she worries that some parents may write off what they’re experiencing as burnout, instead of getting treated for an underlying condition like anxiety or depression.

Dr. Birndorf also emphasized that the onus should not be solely on parents to recognize — and manage — their own burnout. They have been stuck in a situation she called “untenable,” caused not just by the pandemic, but also by a longstanding gap in policies that would offer working parents the day-to-day support they need.

“The issues are systemic,” Dr. Birndorf said. “Burnout is happening in the context of a national crisis, which is about paid parental leave and universal child care. Without those things, what are we supposed to do?”

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HEADLINE	05/05 Russia fighting intensifies in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/05/world/europe/ukraine-russia-east-donetsk-mariupol.html

DONETSK REGION, Ukraine — Fighting raged on Thursday across eastern Ukraine, from the Kharkiv area in the north where Ukrainian forces regained ground, to Mariupol in the south, where Russians breached the last Ukrainian redoubt in a steel plant, as Moscow's forces battled to present President Vladimir V. Putin with something he can call victory.

Some of the most ferocious combat took place between those two poles, in or near the north of the Donetsk region, where the earth heaved with constant artillery bombardment. Russian forces approached from the east, north and south, vainly trying to trap and destroy Ukrainian units in and around the cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, and the towns of Lyman and Barvinkove.

At a busy medical field hospital in that cauldron, where the smoke of battle dulled the spring sunlight, a Ukrainian soldier with a concussion lay curled into a fetal position, while another, his face half torn away, lay dead in a black body bag. In Kramatorsk, now largely abandoned, three Russian airstrikes gutted a large apartment complex and a store selling bras and underwear, injuring 26 people.

The Kremlin is determined to reach some kind of milestone, Western officials and analysts say, by May 9, the day Russia commemorates the Soviet Union's triumph over Nazi Germany with a military parade full of bombast and martial spirit that Mr. Putin has turned into something close to a religious holiday. After more than two months of his vaunted military's halting performance and heavy losses in Ukraine, they say, Russia's autocratic leader needs something to show for the war's massive cost in lives and treasure.

But it is difficult to evaluate how the actual fighting is going. The Russian advance appears to have been sluggish, with forces taking a few villages each day in one location, while losing just as many in another. Ukrainian forces are mounting a highly mobile defense, maneuvering in small units around the larger masses of Russian forces, ensuring that lines remain fluid and unpredictable.

"The front is swinging this way and that," said a tattooed 24-year-old army paramedic named Zhenya who was resting at the field hospital. "At first they weren't hitting nearby here, now shells are coming in over the fence."

In Mariupol, perhaps the city most devastated by the Russian invasion that began on Feb. 24, furious close-quarters combat shook the sprawling Azovstal steel plant, as Russian forces finally began to penetrate the complex where the last Ukrainians have held out for two months in a warren of underground bunkers. The number of Ukrainian fighters remaining is unclear, but Ukrainian officials said that even after a recent trickle of evacuations, about 200 civilians are still trapped there.

"Heavy, bloody battles are raging," Lt. Col. Denys Prokopenko, a Ukrainian commander at Azovstal, said in a video posted Wednesday night. On Thursday, Petro Andriushchenko, an adviser to the city government, said that with nonstop shelling and fighting, the plant had been "turned into hell."

In its latest assessment, the Institute for the Study of War, a research organization in Washington, said that Moscow wanted "to claim complete control of Mariupol by May 9, with Russian propagandists recently arriving in the city to set conditions for further claims of a Russian victory."

With Russian efforts now concentrated farther south, Ukrainian forces have been pushing the Russians back in the Kharkiv area, recapturing towns and villages, and in some cases forcing Russian units beyond artillery range of the battered city.

The Kremlin had a muted response on Thursday to The New York Times's report that the United States had supplied intelligence to Ukrainian forces that had helped them locate and kill Russian generals. Russia was already "well aware" that NATO and its member countries were sharing intelligence with Ukraine, said Dmitri S. Peskov, Mr. Putin's spokesman, who added that Western aid only lengthens the war and "cannot prevent the fulfillment" of Russia's goals.

The Pentagon spokesman, John F. Kirby, declined to comment directly, but said the United States did not specifically provide intelligence on the locations of Russian officers, “or participate in the targeting decisions of the Ukrainian military.”

After Russia’s initial drive in the north failed to take Kyiv, Ukraine’s capital, its forces withdrew and began to focus on capturing territory in the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions, but their progress has been slow and costly.

In a striking moment of candor, Mr. Putin’s closest foreign ally, Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, the ruler of neighboring Belarus, called the fighting a war — a term forbidden in Russia — and acknowledged that it was not going well for Russia. “I feel like this operation has dragged on,” he said in an interview with The Associated Press.

In the north of Donetsk, the dead and wounded flowed into the field hospital at a regular clip as Russian artillery pounded the rolling, wooded hills where Ukrainian troops were mounting their defense.

On a visit on Thursday, ordnance whizzed, thumped and boomed in all directions. Military paramedics brought wounded soldiers to the field hospital to stabilize them before sending them by ambulance to a military hospital farther from the front.

Ukrainian military officials asked that the precise location of the field hospital, about a 25-minute drive from Kramatorsk, be withheld to prevent the Russians from targeting it. Even so, Russian artillery shells landed nearby.

The toll on Ukrainian forces could be measured by the columns of ambulances racing away from the front lines, even as trucks and armored vehicles carrying troops and equipment headed in the opposite direction.

“We’re not making any kind of prognoses,” said Valeria Skorik, a press officer for the 81st brigade, among the units fighting in the northern part of the Donetsk region. “I’ve been asked by journalists about what kind of event we might have on May 9, but I’ve just decided not to answer.”

Western officials and analysts say that Mr. Putin could be planning to make a dramatic announcement on Victory Day, when he traditionally reviews the parade from an elevated platform in Red Square and delivers a speech surrounded by aged World War II veterans. He often has other heads of government with him, too, but the war has left Russia largely isolated, and the Kremlin says no foreign leaders were invited this year.

Speculation has centered on a possible claim of victory by Mr. Putin or, more ominously, an acknowledgment that Russia is at war and the announcement of a mass mobilization with expanded conscription, a move that would be unpopular.

Ukrainian forces in and around northern Donetsk appear to be holding the line for now, offering poor prospects for a Russian achievement there, despite Russia’s incessant hammering at Ukrainian military positions and towns.

The airstrike on Kramatorsk left a large crater and generated a shock wave so powerful that it blew out the interior walls of a row of apartments about 75 feet away and ripped steel doors off hinges. Touring the damage, Pavel Kirilenko, chief of the Donetsk region’s military administration, said that remarkably, no one had been killed.

“This is yet more confirmation that everyone needs to leave the city,” Mr. Kirilenko said. “The enemy is exclusively targeting elements of civilian infrastructure in order to spread panic — and not only spread panic, but to destroy the civilian population.”

In anticipation of a potential assault, officials have urged anyone who is able to leave the city as soon as possible. Many have done so: The streets of Kramatorsk, an industrial and administrative center with a

prewar population of about 150,000, are largely empty. Most businesses are shuttered. Each day, buses leave the city center, evacuating residents to points west.

But not everyone has heeded the calls to leave. Inside the destroyed apartment building on Thursday was a woman in a bathrobe, cradling a small dog. She gave only her first name, Viktoria.

The explosion, at about 4:30 a.m., blew her balcony and the entire front wall of her apartment onto her and her husband as they slept. Her husband suffered a large head wound; drops of blood stained the mattress and floor. Her 24-year-old daughter was left with a broad cluster of bloody cuts from flying glass.

She said local officials had urged her to shelter in a school, at least for the night. But she said she just wanted to seal the front of her apartment in plastic to keep out the elements, and stay there for the night.

“There is shelling everywhere,” she said. “So where are we supposed to go?”

For the last defenders of Mariupol, long cut off from outside aid with their numbers and supplies dwindling, the situation was even more dire.

Russian forces managed to find their way into the four-square-mile Azovstal complex where they have been sheltering with the help of a former worker familiar with its layout, according to Anton Gerashchenko, an adviser to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Mr. Gerashchenko, on social media and speaking to reporters, said that an electrician who had worked at the steel plant showed the Russians tunnels to enter the complex.

He said the Russian desire to declare victory on May 9 explained why Russian state television hosts, who are some of Mr. Putin’s leading cheerleaders — including Vladimir Solovyov, under U.S. and European sanctions for promoting Kremlin disinformation — have traveled to Mariupol.

Communications from Azovstal briefly went dark on Wednesday, but on Thursday morning, fighters in the bunkers were again sending messages via social media platforms, promising not to surrender.

“It has been three days since Russian troops broke into the territory of Azovstal,” said Capt. Svyatoslav Palamar, the deputy commander of the Azov regiment at the plant. “Heavy fighting continues to take a bloody toll.”

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HEADLINE	05/05 Why battle for Mariupol important for Putin
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/05/world/putin-war-mariupol-ukraine.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article
GIST	<p>For Russia, the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol is a potent symbol.</p> <p>It is a predominantly Russian-speaking city in the eastern Ukrainian region known as the Donbas, the one where President Vladimir V. Putin falsely claimed Ukraine was carrying out a “genocide” before launching his invasion.</p> <p>The Azovstal steel plant in the middle of the city has also become the last bastion of Ukrainian military’s Azov regiment, whose origins in a far-right military group, the Azov Battalion, have lent a veneer of credibility to Mr. Putin’s false narrative that the country is overrun by “Nazis.” The steel plant is the last holdout of Ukrainian resistance in Mariupol as Moscow’s forces mount a final push to seize control of the city.</p> <p>In weeks of fierce fighting, much of the city of more than 400,000 was leveled, and Ukrainian officials said more than 20,000 civilians were killed. But despite the horrific toll, Russian state media outlets are now highlighting Russia’s capture of almost all of Mariupol as a long-anticipated victory in Mr. Putin’s campaign to “denazify” Ukraine.</p>

That message is particularly important to the Kremlin this week, as it prepares for May 9 celebrations on Monday, when Russia marks the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. The looming Victory Day holiday — one of the most important dates on the calendar for Russians as they remember the 27 million Soviets killed in World War II — is already being used by the Russian government to channel national pride into support for the war.

Vladimir Solovyov, a hawkish state television host, traveled to Mariupol this week and was captured on video holding court in the city in military fatigues, later telling viewers that local residents “wanted to touch me and hug me.”

Another host, Dmitri Kiselyov, highlighted the fight for Mariupol last Sunday on his marquee weekly news show, which declared: “Denazification is when the neo-Nazis from the Azov Battalion rot alive in cold factory basements.”

But perhaps the most striking sign of Mariupol’s importance ahead of May 9 is that one of Mr. Putin’s most powerful aides, deputy chief of staff Sergei Kiriyenko, visited the city this week. He was shown meeting with a man described as a Mariupol World War II veteran, and looked on as the man became the first Mariupol resident to get a passport of the breakaway “Donetsk People’s Republic,” which Mr. Putin recognized as independent in February.

On Wednesday, Mr. Kiriyenko helped unveil a statue to “Grandma Anya” — a Ukrainian woman filmed greeting Ukrainian soldiers with a Soviet banner last month, apparently thinking they were Russian, according to Russian media.

Anya, whose full name is not known, has become a symbol for proponents of the war in Russia of the idea that some Ukrainians are in fact greeting Russian troops as liberators. Mr. Kiriyenko, in his speech, evoked the May 9 holiday and called her “a living symbol of the continuity of generations. Continuity in the fight against Nazism and fascism.”

Mr. Kiriyenko is in charge of domestic politics in Mr. Putin’s administration, and the fact that he is becoming closely involved in Russian-occupied eastern Ukraine is being seen as a signal that the Kremlin may be planning to incorporate the territory into Russia. In Mariupol, Mr. Kiriyenko said that it would not be possible to hold Victory Day parades on Monday in Donetsk and Luhansk, the main cities of the Donbas, but he pledged they would take place in the future.

“This time will come, and it will come soon,” Mr. Kiriyenko said.

Russian state media have given short shrift to the devastation in Mariupol, and have falsely claimed that Ukrainian forces firing at their own city are largely to blame. At Wednesday’s statue unveiling, Denis Pushilin, the head of the Donetsk separatist region, acknowledged the destruction but also evoked World War II to promise that the city would be rebuilt, according to a news release issued by his office.

“I am sure that we will also manage it,” Mr. Pushilin said, “especially because Russia is with us.”

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HEADLINE	05/05 Unruly air passenger incidents decline
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/05/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases?name=stylncoronavirus&region=hub&block=storyline live updates block recirc&action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection#unruly-air-passenger-incidents
GIST	A week after a federal judge in Florida struck down a government mask mandate on public transportation, the number of unruly air passenger incidents reached its lowest level since 2020, according to data the Federal Aviation Administration released on Wednesday.

[The agency reported](#) 1.9 incidents per 10,000 flights during the week ending April 24, down from 4.4 incidents per 10,000 flights a week earlier. It declined to cite a reason for the drop.

The decrease in incidents comes after the former F. A.A. administrator Steve Dickson implemented a zero-tolerance policy against unruly passenger behavior in January, resulting in hefty fines instead of the warning letters or counseling that were used in previous policies.

Last month, the F.A.A. recommended record fines of \$81,950 and \$77,272 against two passengers involved [in separate incidents](#) on flights operated by American Airlines and Delta Air Lines. One woman was accused of spitting at, head-butting and biting a crew member, while another attempted to hug and kiss the passenger seated next to her before walking to the cabin door and trying to exit the plane during the flight.

“The unruly passenger rate dropped by more than 60 percent after the F.A.A. implemented its zero-tolerance policy and while the face mask mandate was still in effect,” the agency said. The rate dropped further after the mask mandate was lifted on April 18.

Since January 2021, 7,200 unruly passenger incidents have been reported to the F. A.A., and 70 percent involved the enforcement of masking rules.

“Behaving dangerously on a plane will cost you; that’s a promise,” said Billy Nolen, the acting administrator of the F.A.A., in a statement last month. “Unsafe behavior simply does not fly and keeping our Zero Tolerance policy will help us continue making progress to prevent and punish this behavior.”

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HEADLINE	05/06 Day 72 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/06/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-72-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A third United Nations operation is under way to evacuate civilians from the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol. “A convoy is proceeding to get to Azovstal by tomorrow morning hopefully to receive those civilians remaining in that bleak hell ... and take them back to safety,” the UN humanitarian chief, Martin Griffiths, said.• The UN secretary general, António Guterres, has described the war zone in Mariupol as appearing to be “hellscape”. The UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross have so far helped nearly 500 civilians flee the steel plant area in the southern port city during two operations in the past week.• A Ukrainian commander said “heavy, bloody fighting” continues at Azovstal and Russia violated its promise of a ceasefire, preventing the evacuation of civilians. Svyatoslav Palamar, a commander of the Azov regiment that is defending the site, said in a video on Telegram: “Russians violated the promise of a truce and did not allow the evacuation of civilians who continue to hide from shelling in the basement of the plant.” Palamar earlier pleaded for help for the “wounded soldiers dying in terrible agony” and the evacuation of civilians trapped in the plant.• The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, demanded that Ukraine order its fighters holed up in Azovstal to surrender, the Kremlin said. In a call with Israel’s prime minister, Naftali Bennett, Putin claimed Russia was still ready to provide safe passage for civilians from the plant, according to the Kremlin.• Ukraine is “unlikely” to launch a counter-offensive before mid-June, when it hopes to have received more weapons from its allies, an adviser to the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said. Oleksiy Arestovych added that he did not expect Russia’s offensive in Ukraine to produce any “significant results” by 9 May, when Russia celebrates its Victory Day over Nazi Germany.• The US says it shared intelligence with Ukraine about the location of the Russian missile cruiser Moskva prior to the strike that sank the warship, but the decision to attack was

	<p>taken by the Ukrainians. US officials also reportedly confirmed they are providing intelligence that has helped Ukrainian forces target and kill many of the Russian generals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zelenskiy has reportedly invited the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, and president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, to visit him in Kyiv. Zelenskiy made the invitation during a telephone call with Steinmeier in which “past irritations were cleared up”, weeks after the president was snubbed by Ukraine, a source from the German president’s office said. Zelenskiy confirmed he had spoken with Steinmeier today. • The UK government has placed sanctions on Evraz, the multinational steelmaker part-owned by the billionaire Roman Abramovich. The company was formerly counted among Britain’s biggest companies. The Foreign Office said on Thursday that the action would “further chip away at Putin’s financial reserves and siege economy, and support Ukraine’s continued resistance”. • The European Union plans to impose sanctions on Alina Kabaeva, long rumoured to be Vladimir Putin’s girlfriend, and Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox church. Two sources said the EU has proposed sanctions on Kabaeva, a former Olympic gymnast whose appearance on a draft sanctions list was first reported by Bloomberg. • Naftali Bennett said Vladimir Putin had apologised for the Russian foreign minister’s claims that Adolf Hitler had Jewish origins. The Israeli prime minister, after a call with Putin, said he had accepted the apology and thanked the president for clarifying his position. • Putin hopes to claim Mariupol as key prop in Victory Day celebrations, according to Ukrainian intelligence. “Mariupol, according to [Russia’s] plans, should become the centre of celebrations,” Ukraine’s defence intelligence agency said. “For this purpose, the city is urgently cleaning the central streets from rubble, bodies of dead and unexploded Russian ammunition. A large-scale propaganda campaign continues, during which Russians will be shown stories about the ‘joy’ of local residents from meeting with the invaders.”
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HEADLINE	05/05 Firefighters slow advance New Mexico blaze
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/05/new-mexico-wildfire-us-biden-declares-disaster
GIST	<p>Firefighters in New Mexico have slowed the advance of the largest wildfire currently burning in the US, as Joe Biden declared the situation a disaster, bringing new resources to remote stretches of New Mexico that have been devastated by fire since early April.</p> <p>Nearly 1,300 firefighters and other personnel are currently battling the fire, which has fanned out across 258 sq miles (669 sq km) of high alpine forest and grasslands at the southern tip of the Rocky Mountains.</p> <p>Fire bosses are seizing upon an interlude of relatively calm and cool weather to prevent the fire from pushing any closer to the small New Mexico city of Las Vegas, and other villages scattered along the fire’s shifting fronts. Airplanes and helicopters dropped slurries of red fire retardant from the sky, as ground crews cleared timber and brush to starve the fire along crucial fronts.</p> <p>The federal disaster declaration was announced on Wednesday evening by the New Mexico congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernandez.</p> <p>“It will help us do that rebuilding and it will help us with the expenses and the hardship that people are facing right now,” the congresswoman said. “We’re glad it happened this quickly.”</p> <p>Wildfires have become a year-round threat in the drought-stricken west – moving faster and burning hotter than ever due to climate change, scientists and fire experts have said. Rising temperatures have escalated drought conditions, desiccating vegetation that sprang up during last summer’s strong monsoon season in the south-west. While the region typically has its driest days in late spring and early summer, the climate crisis has intensified the cycle, setting the stage for bigger blazes and a longer fire season.</p> <p>“Climate change is taking a situation that would be bad for us normally,” says Gregg Garfin, a climatologist at the University of Arizona, “and turning the dial up.”</p>

Bulldozers have been scraping fire lines on the outskirts of Las Vegas, population 13,000, while crews have conducted controlled burning to clear adjacent vegetation to prevent it from igniting. Aircraft dropped more fire retardant as a second line of defense along a ridge just west of Las Vegas in preparation for intense winds expected over the weekend. The fire was contained across just 20% of its perimeter.

Strong winds with gusts up to 45mph are expected to return on Saturday afternoon along with above-normal temperatures and “abysmally low” humidity that make for extreme fire danger, said Todd Shoemaker, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Albuquerque.

“Sunday and Monday are probably looking to be even worse.”

Mandatory evacuation orders have been issued for an estimated 15,500 homes in outlying areas and in the valleys of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains that border Las Vegas. The tally of homes destroyed by the fire stands about 170 but could grow higher because officials have not been able to conduct assessment in all of the burn zones.

Biden’s disaster declaration releases emergency funds to recovery efforts in three counties in north-eastern New Mexico where fires are still raging, as well as southern New Mexico areas where wind-driven blazes killed two people and destroyed over 200 homes in mid-April.

The aid includes grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other relief programs for people and businesses, a White House statement said.

Officials at Los Alamos National Laboratory were warily tracking another wildfire that crept within about 5 miles (8km) of facilities at the US nuclear research complex.

Dan Pearson, a fire behavior specialist with the federal government, said weather forecasters predict two days of relatively light winds before the return of strong spring gales.

“Our prayers are working because we’ve had advantageous winds throughout the fire area today,” he said. “We’ll take advantage of this fact over the next few days. What we can do is build resilient pockets.”

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HEADLINE	05/06 China doubles-down on zero-Covid policy
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/06/xi-jinping-attacks-doubters-as-he-doubles-down-on-chinas-zero-covid-policy
GIST	<p>Xi Jinping has confirmed there is no intention to turn away from China’s zero-Covid commitment, in a major speech to the country’s senior officials which also warned against any criticism or doubting of the policy.</p> <p>Addressing the seven-member politburo standing committee, China’s highest decision-making body, specifically about the Shanghai outbreak, the president said China’s response was “scientific and effective”. He told officials to “unswervingly adhere to the general policy of dynamic zero-Covid”.</p> <p>“We have won the battle to defend Wuhan, and we will certainly be able to win the battle to defend Shanghai,” he said, according to a translation by Sinocism’s Bill Bishop.</p> <p>China is the last major economy still committed to a policy of containment and elimination of the virus, despite the increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant, which has overwhelmed other previous zero-Covid jurisdictions. It has largely stuck to the measures employed throughout the pandemic – lockdowns, mass testing and movement restrictions based on health codes.</p> <p>But a weeks-long lockdown in Shanghai sparked a major crisis with food shortages and delivery bottlenecks for the 25 million residents, and major business and economic impacts. It also prompted an</p>

unusual outpouring of criticism and protest, including on the merits of persisting with zero-Covid against Omicron.

In his address on Thursday, Xi appeared to send a message to those wavering, to resolutely oppose all distortions, doubts and denials.

“We will resolutely struggle against all words and deeds that distort, doubt and deny our epidemic prevention policies.”

Xi’s address also called out “problems of inadequate understanding, inadequate preparation and inadequate work [and] resolutely overcome the ideas of contempt, indifference and self-righteousness”.

An analysis of the speech by the China Media Project said the language should be seen as “a direct criticism of unspecified local CCP leaders who have questioned the policies at the centre, or who have been insufficiently successful in applying them”.

“And it is difficult not to hear in this phrase about ‘self-righteousness’ a condemnation of leaders in Shanghai in particular,” it said.

Health experts agree with Chinese authorities that vaccination and booster rates are too low, and health resources too inequitable across regions for the country to risk opening up. However, analysts say the zero-Covid policy is now so entrenched in the political legitimacy of the Chinese Communist party and Xi that even when conditions change there is no way out, barring a major and potentially damaging backdown.

On Friday China reported 4,696 cases, including 4,269 in Shanghai and 70 in Beijing. Henan province, where the capital of Zhengzhou just went into lockdown, recorded 79. Economists have forecast a worsening economy if Shanghai-style lockdowns continue. One analyst this week projected it would cost US\$257bn, or 1.5% of China’s 2021 GDP, by the end of the year if every tier-1 city employed the thrice-weekly testing regime currently operating in Beijing and other places.

The five-day labour day holiday, which ended on Thursday, saw a 43% year-on-year reduction in tourism spending. Rail journeys were down by more than 70%.

In the capital, Beijing, authorities have resisted a city-wide lockdown, instead imposing movement and transport restrictions, activity and venue shutdowns, and lockdowns of individual residential compounds. It has ordered people from some districts to work from home, and reopened mass quarantine centres to house mild and asymptomatic cases.

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HEADLINE	05/05 WHO: nearly 15M deaths linked to Covid-19
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/who-nearly-15m-deaths-associated-with-covid-19/
GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — The World Health Organization estimates that nearly 15 million people were killed either by coronavirus or by its impact on overwhelmed health systems during the first two years of the pandemic, more than double the current official death toll of over 6 million.</p> <p>Most of the deaths occurred in Southeast Asia, Europe and the Americas, according to a WHO report issued Thursday.</p> <p>The U.N. health agency’s director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, described the newly calculated figure as “sobering,” saying it should prompt countries to invest more in their capacities to quell future health emergencies.</p> <p>WHO tasked scientists with determining the actual number of COVID-19 deaths between January 2020 and the end of last year. They estimated that between 13.3 million and 16.6 million people died either due</p>

to the coronavirus directly or because of factors somehow attributed to the pandemic's impact on health systems, such as cancer patients who were unable to seek treatment when hospitals were full of COVID patients.

Based on that range, the scientists came up with an approximated total of 14.9 million.

The estimate was based on country-reported data and statistical modeling, but only about half of countries provided information. WHO said it wasn't yet able to break down the data to distinguish between direct deaths from COVID-19 and those related to effects of the pandemic, but the agency plans a future project examining death certificates.

"This may seem like just a bean-counting exercise, but having these WHO numbers is so critical to understanding how we should combat future pandemics and continue to respond to this one," said Dr. Albert Ko, an infectious diseases specialist at the Yale School of Public Health who was not linked to the WHO research.

For example, Ko said, South Korea's decision to invest heavily in public health after it suffered a severe outbreak of MERS allowed it to escape COVID-19 with a per-capita death rate around a 20th of the one in the United States.

Accurately counting COVID-19 deaths has been problematic throughout the pandemic, as reports of confirmed cases represent only a fraction of the devastation wrought by the virus, largely because of limited testing. Government figures reported to WHO and a separate tally kept by Johns Hopkins University show more than 6.2 million reported virus deaths to date.

Scientists at the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington calculated for a recent study published in the journal Lancet that there were more than 18 million COVID deaths from January 2020 to December 2021.

A team led by Canadian researchers estimated there were more than 3 million uncounted coronavirus deaths in India alone. WHO's new analysis estimated that missed deaths in India alone ranged between 3.3 million to 6.5 million.

In a statement following the release of WHO's data, India disputed the U.N. agency's methodology. India's Health and Family Welfare Ministry called the analysis and data collection methods "questionable" and complained that the new death estimates were released "without adequately addressing India's concerns."

Samira Asma, a senior WHO director, acknowledged that "numbers are sometimes controversial" and that all estimates are only an approximation of the virus' catastrophic effects.

"It has become very obvious during the entire course of the pandemic, there have been data that is missing," Asma told reporters during a press briefing on Thursday. "Basically, all of us were caught unprepared."

Ko said the new figures from WHO might also explain some lingering mysteries about the pandemic, like why Africa appears to have been one of the least affected by the virus, despite its fragile health systems and low vaccination rates.

"Were the mortality rates so low because we couldn't count the deaths, or was there some other factor to explain that?" he asked, citing the far higher mortality rates in the U.S. and Europe.

Dr. Bharat Pankhania, a public health specialist at Britain's University of Exeter, said the world may never get close to measuring the true toll of COVID-19, particularly in poor countries.

	<p>“When you have a massive outbreak where people are dying in the streets because of a lack of oxygen, bodies were abandoned or people had to be cremated quickly because of cultural beliefs, we end up never knowing just how many people died,” he explained.</p> <p>Pankhania said that while the estimated COVID-19 death toll still pales in comparison to the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, which experts estimate caused up to 100 million deaths, the fact that so many people died despite the advances of modern medicine, including vaccines, is shameful.</p> <p>He also warned that the cost of COVID-19 could be far more damaging in the long term, given the increasing burden of caring for people with long COVID.</p> <p>“With the Spanish flu, there was the flu and then there were some (lung) illnesses people suffered, but that was it,” he said. “There was not an enduring immunological condition that we’re seeing right now with COVID.”</p> <p>“We do not know the extent to which people with long COVID will have their lives cut short and if they will have repeated infections that will cause them even more problems,” Pankhania said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Covid-19 coverage for all dries up
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/covid-coverage-for-all-dries-up-even-as-hospital-costs-rise-2/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — For the first time, the U.S. came close to providing health care for all during the coronavirus pandemic — but for just one condition, COVID-19.</p> <p>Now, things are reverting to the way they were as federal money for COVID care of the uninsured dries up, creating a potential barrier to timely access.</p> <p>But the virus is not contained, even if it’s better controlled. And safety-net hospitals and clinics are seeing sharply higher costs for salaries and other basic operating expenses. They fear they won’t be prepared if there’s another surge and no backstop.</p> <p>“We haven’t turned anybody away yet,” said Dr. Mark Loafman, chair of family and community medicine at Cook County Health in Chicago. “But I think it’s just a matter of time ... People don’t get cancer treatment or blood pressure treatment every day in America because they can’t afford it.”</p> <p>A \$20 billion government COVID program covered testing, treatment and vaccine costs for uninsured people. But that’s been shut down. Special Medicaid COVID coverage for the uninsured in more than a dozen states also likely faces its last months.</p> <p>At Parkland Health, the frontline hospital system for Dallas, Dr. Fred Cerise questions the logic of dialing back federal dollars at a time when health officials have rolled out a new “test-to-treat” strategy. People with COVID-19 can now get antiviral pills to take at home, hopefully avoiding hospitalization. Vice President Kamala Harris, who recently tested positive but is back working at the White House, is an example.</p> <p>“Test-to-treat will be very difficult for uninsured individuals,” predicted Cerise, president and CEO of the system. “If it’s a change in strategy on the large scale, and it’s coming without funding, people are going to be reluctant to adopt that.”</p> <p>Officials at the federal Department of Health and Human Services say the new antiviral drugs like Paxlovid have been paid for by taxpayers, and are supposed to be free of charge to patients, even uninsured ones.</p> <p>But they acknowledge that some uninsured people can’t afford the medical consultation needed to get a prescription. “We hear from state and local partners that the lack of funding for the Uninsured Program is</p>

creating challenges for individuals to access medications,” said Dr. Meg Sullivan, chief medical officer for the HHS preparedness and response division.

The nation has not pinched pennies on the pandemic before.

“We’re well short of universal health coverage in the U.S., but for a time, we had universal coverage for COVID,” said Larry Levitt, a health policy expert with the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation. “It was extraordinary.”

Recently an urgent White House request for \$22.5 billion for COVID priorities failed to advance in Congress. Even a pared-back version is stuck. Part of the Biden administration’s request involves \$1.5 billion to replenish the Uninsured Program, which paid for testing, treatment and vaccine-related bills for uninsured patients. The program has now stopped accepting claims due to lack of money.

That program, along with a less known Medicaid option for states, allowed thousands of uninsured people to get care without worrying about costs. Bipartisan support has given way as congressional Republicans raise questions about pandemic spending.

The Uninsured Program was run by the Health Resources and Services Administration, an HHS agency. Medical providers seeing uninsured people could submit their bills for reimbursement. Over the last two years, more than 50,000 hospitals, clinics, and medical practices received payments. Officials say they can turn the program back on if Congress releases more money.

The Medicaid coverage option began under the Trump administration as a way to help states pay for testing uninsured people. President Joe Biden’s coronavirus relief bill expanded it to treatment and vaccine costs as well. It’s like a limited insurance policy for COVID. The coverage can’t be used for other services, like a knee replacement. The federal government pays 100% of the cost.

Fifteen states, from deep blue California to bright red South Carolina, have taken advantage of the option, along with three U.S. territories. It will end once the federal coronavirus public health emergency is over, currently forecast for later this year.

New Hampshire Medicaid Director Henry Lipman said the coverage option allowed his state to sign up about 9,500 people for COVID care that includes the new antiviral drugs that can be taken at home.

“It’s really the safety net for people who don’t have any access to insurance,” said Lipman. “It’s a limited situation, but in the pandemic it’s a good back-up to have. It makes a lot of sense with such a communicable disease.”

With COVID cases now at relatively low levels, demand for testing, treatment and vaccination is down. But the urgency felt by hospitals and other medical service providers is driven by their own bottom lines.

In Missouri, Golden Valley Memorial Healthcare CEO Craig Thompson is worried to see federal funding evaporate just as operating costs are soaring. Staff have gotten raises, drug costs have risen by 20% and supply costs by 12%.

“We’ve now exited this pandemic ... into probably the highest inflationary environment that I’ve seen in my career,” Thompson said. The health system serves a largely rural area between Kansas City and Springfield.

In Kentucky, Family Health Centers of Louisville closed a testing service for uninsured people once federal funds dried up. The private company they were working with planned to charge \$65 a test.

Things are manageable now because there’s little demand, said spokeswoman Melissa Mather, “but if we get hit with another omicron, it’s going to be very difficult.”

	<p>Floridian Debra McCoskey-Reisert is uninsured and lost her older brother to COVID-19 in the first wave two years ago. In one of their last conversations, he made her promise she wouldn't catch the virus.</p> <p>McCoskey-Reisert, who lives north of Tampa, has managed to avoid getting sick so far. But she's overshadowed by fear of what could happen if she or her husband get infected.</p> <p>"If either one of us get sick with COVID, we don't have a way to pay for it," she said. "It would likely bankrupt us if we can't find some other help."</p> <p>Retrenchment on the uninsured mirrors some of the bigger problems of the U.S. health care system, said Chicago hospital physician Loafman.</p> <p>"Quite frankly, we as a society take care of the uninsured for COVID because it's affecting us," he said. "You know, a gated community doesn't keep a virus out ... that's sort of the ugly truth of this, is that our altruism around this was really self-motivated."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 USPS: 'uncomfortable' postal rate hikes
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/postal-service-rate-hikes-louis-dejoy/507-02ee6cbb-2af2-4b68-af3d-43dfff0a4043
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Americans should get used to “uncomfortable” postage rate increases in coming years as the U.S. Postal Service seeks to become self-sufficient, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy said Thursday.</p> <p>The Postal Service Board of Governors sets postage rates, but DeJoy said he'll advocate for raising prices until “we have accomplished our objective of projecting a trajectory that shows us being self-sustaining.”</p> <p>“I believe we have been severely damaged by at least 10 years of a defective pricing model which cannot be satisfied by one or two annual price increases, especially in this inflationary environment,” he added. DeJoy made the remarks at a Board of Governors meeting in which the Postal Service reported a loss of about \$1.7 billion for the latest quarter.</p> <p>A sweeping overhaul meant to shore up the Postal Service's financial future will be reflected in the next quarter's results. The long-delayed law also ensures six-day-a-week mail delivery.</p> <p>The bill was signed by President Joe Biden on the same day the Postal Service announced plans for the latest rate increase.</p> <p>If the increase wins final approval from the Postal Regulatory Commission, then the cost of a first-class “forever” stamp will grow by 2 cents to 60 cents, effective July 10.</p> <p>The Postal Service Reform Act lifts budget requirements that have contributed to the agency's red ink, and spells out that mail must be delivered six days a week, except for federal holidays, natural disasters and some other situations.</p> <p>Postage sales and other services were supposed to sustain the Postal Service, but it has suffered 14 straight years of losses. Growing worker compensation and benefit costs, plus steady declines in mail volume, have exacerbated losses, even as the service delivers to 1 million additional locations every year.</p> <p>The new law ends a requirement that the Postal Service finance workers' health care benefits ahead of time for the next 75 years — an obligation that private companies and federal agencies do not face. Biden said that rule had “stretched the Postal Service's finances almost to the breaking point.”</p> <p>Now, future retirees will enroll in Medicare, while other health plans and the Postal Service cover only current retirees' actual health care costs that aren't paid for by the federal health insurance program for older people.</p>

	To measure the agency's progress in improving its service, the law also requires it to set up an online dashboard that would be searchable by ZIP code to show how long it takes to deliver letters and packages.
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HEADLINE	05/05 New 30yr-mortgage rate highest in 13yrs
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/us-mortgage-rates-rise-30-year/507-1073109b-3140-4edb-bf5f-3682269aa778
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Average long-term U.S. mortgage rates resumed their ascent this week, as the key 30-year loan reached its highest point since 2009.</p> <p>The increases came in the week preceding the widely anticipated action by the Federal Reserve, announced Wednesday, to intensify its fight against the worst inflation in 40 years by raising its benchmark interest rate by a half-percentage point and signaling further large rate hikes to come. The Fed's move, its most aggressive since 2000, will bring higher costs for mortgages as well as credit cards, auto loans and other borrowing for individuals and businesses.</p> <p>Mortgage buyer Freddie Mac reported Thursday that the 30-year rate rose to 5.27% from 5.1% last week, when it edged down after seven weeks of increases. By contrast, the average rate stood at 2.96% a year ago.</p> <p>The average rate on 15-year, fixed-rate mortgages, popular among those refinancing their homes, jumped to 4.52% from 4.4% last week.</p> <p>With inflation at a four-decade high, rising mortgage rates, elevated home prices and tight supply of homes for sale, homeownership has become less attainable, especially for first-time buyers.</p> <p>Some economists suggest that home sales this year could decline as much as 10% from 2021 levels.</p> <p>In a statement Wednesday following their two-day meeting, Fed policymakers noted that Russia's invasion and war on Ukraine is worsening inflation pressures by raising oil and food prices. Inflation, according to the Fed's preferred gauge, reached 6.6% last month, the highest in four decades. It has been accelerated by a combination of robust consumer spending, chronic supply bottlenecks and sharply higher gas and food prices.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Stocks slump; Wall Street worries grow
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/stocks-slump-wall-street-worries-grow-thursday-interest-rates/507-a01520ef-d811-4838-991b-f7162fd25d65
GIST	<p>NEW YORK — Stocks closed sharply lower on Wall Street as worries grow in markets that the higher interest rates the Federal Reserve is using in its fight against inflation will slow the economy.</p> <p>The S&P 500 pulled back 3.6%, erasing a rally from a day earlier and marking its biggest loss in almost two years. The Dow fell 1,063 points, or 3.1%.</p> <p>Tech stocks fell the most, pulling the Nasdaq down 5%. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note rose to 3.04%.</p> <p>Rising yields are sure to put upward pressure on mortgage rates, which are already at their highest level since 2009.</p> <p>On Wednesday, the Fed raised its benchmark interest rate by half a percentage point as part of an effort to slow consumer borrowing and tamp down inflation, which is at a four-decade high. The market rallied</p>

when Fed Chair Jerome Powell dismissed the possibility the Fed could resort to a more aggressive three-quarters point hike in the future.

Now, traders are starting to fret more about the impact of the Fed's moves to dampen demand and slow the economy.

"The Fed is between a rock and a hard place, and because of instant information investors are experiencing both fear and greed at the exact same moment," said Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist at CFRA.

The Fed's aggressive shift to raise interest rates has investors worrying about whether it can pull off the delicate dance to slow the economy enough to halt high inflation but not so much as to cause a downturn.

The pace and size of interest rate increases is being scrutinized closely on Wall Street.

"Investors realized that by the Fed continuing to take a very measured approach, it could actually allow inflation to remain out of control," Stovall said.

The latest move by the Fed to raise interest rates by a half-percentage point had been widely expected. Markets steadied this week ahead of the policy update, but Wall Street was concerned the Fed might elect to raise rates by three-quarters of a percentage point at its next meeting. Powell eased those concerns, saying the central bank is "not actively considering" such an increase.

The central bank also announced that it will start reducing its huge \$9 trillion balance sheet, which consists mainly of Treasury and mortgage bonds, starting June 1. Those large holdings are a policy tool the Fed uses to keep long-term interest rates, like those on mortgages, low.

When Powell said the Fed wasn't considering a mammoth increase in short-term rates, that sent a signal to investors to send stock prices soaring and bond yields tumbling. A slower pace of interest-rate hikes would mean less risk of the economy tipping into recession, as well as less downward pressure on prices for all kinds of investments.

But diminishing the odds of a 0.75 point hike doesn't mean the Fed is done raising rates steadily and sharply as it fights to tame inflation, not even close. Economists at BNP Paribas still expect the Fed to keep hiking the federal funds rate until it reaches a range of 3% to 3.25%, up from zero to 0.25% earlier this year.

"We do not think this was Chair Powell's intention," economists at BNP Paribas wrote in a report, citing the market's jubilation on Wednesday, "and we reckon we could see coming 'Fedspeak' seek to re-tighten financial conditions."

The [Bank of England](#) on Thursday raised its benchmark interest rate to the highest level in 13 years, its fourth rate hike since December as U.K. inflation runs at 30-year highs.

Energy markets remain volatile as the conflict in Ukraine continues and demand remains high amid tight supplies of oil. European governments are trying to replace energy supplies from Russia and are considering an embargo. OPEC and allied oil-producing countries decided Thursday to gradually increase the flows of crude they send to the world.

Higher oil and gas prices have been contributing to the uncertainties weighing on investors as they try to assess how inflation will ultimately impact businesses, consumer activity and overall economic growth.

The latest corporate earnings reports are also being closely watched by investors trying to get a better picture of inflation's impact on the economy. Cereal maker Kellogg rose 3.5% after reporting encouraging financial results. Etsy stumbled 17.7% after giving a weak forecast.

	<p>Twitter rose 2% after Tesla CEO Elon Musk said he had secured more backing for his bid to take over the company.</p> <p>Technology companies had some of the biggest losses and weighed down the broader market, in a reversal from the solid gains they made a day earlier. Internet retail giant Amazon slumped 8.1 and Google's parent company fell 5.4%.</p> <p>Homebuilders fell broadly as average long-term home loan rates climbed. D.R. Horton slid 7.1%.</p> <p>The average rate on a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage rose to 5.27% this week, its highest level since 2009, according to mortgage buyer Freddie Mac. A year ago, it averaged 2.96%. Mortgage rates tend to follow moves in the 10-year Treasury yield. The sharp increase in mortgage rates has strained affordability for homebuyers after years of sharply rising prices.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Potential harm secondary fentanyl smoke?
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/metro-bus-driver-local-mayor-describe-increasing-concern-riders-fentanyl-fumes/VPJL4GJG75HHFICZHGSS3VMO3E/
GIST	<p>Few people understand the subtle patterns and rhythms in the daily hustle and crisscross of Metro's vast network of buses more than veteran driver Erik Christensen, who says he has loved his job for 22 years.</p> <p>"No one's getting rich off my efforts," he said, adding, "I like joking with people, and I actually like the physics of driving."</p> <p>Recently, Christensen has been deeply frustrated by Metro's response to a problem he calls an urgent matter of health and safety for his thousands of daily riders. "I'm one voice," he said. "One voice that's getting ignored."</p> <p>Christensen said he and other drivers have reached out to Metro management and even the county executive for months, hoping they'd respond to mounting complaints about a hazardous environment from rampant smoking of opioids — like fentanyl — on buses.</p> <p>"This is personal now. This is about the people, the passengers," he said.</p> <p>Within the last year, countless Metro bus drivers like Erik started reporting disturbing sights mixed with very strong smells onboard their coaches. "The signs are, they put their head down, and start watching for the flame," he said.</p> <p>The warm still air inside buses and trains has made them a preferred and trendy location for many users to burn blue pills known as "blues" M-30s or "30s" — which are commonly laced with fentanyl — on aluminum foil with a lighter beneath it. They inhale the rising smoke and fumes with a straw.</p> <p>"After they inhale or ingest, they can comfortably pass out," Christensen said. "And no one's going to stop them."</p> <p>Christensen and other drivers told KIRO 7 that Metro Transit police do not commonly intervene when the drugs are being used on board, with the common understanding that possession of small amounts of illicit drugs is not enforced or prosecuted in Washington State, following the Blake Supreme Court decision.</p> <p>The DEA says the fentanyl pills being smoked are made in China to appear like prescription painkillers. The CDC says fentanyl is not only the leading killer for Americans ages 18-to 45, but predicts that 100,000 Americans will die from using it this year. The King County Medical Examiner reports that the recent majority of deadly overdose cases are caused by users smoking fentanyl.</p>

“The only thing that’s going to stop them is to interrupt, have something that’s stronger than their desire to get high,” Christensen said “Once they’ve fired up, it is too late.”

Several metro drivers told KIRO 7 they’ve been overcome by fentanyl fumes. Some reported dizziness, headaches and impairment, and had to be taken off from their bus route to the emergency room.

Federal Way responded to KIRO 7’s investigation with a new ordinance.

Jim Ferrell, the mayor of Federal Way, and a former King County prosecuting attorney who’s now running to become King County’s next prosecutor, drafted a groundbreaking ordinance specifically banning smoking fentanyl or other opioids on public buses, trains and other confined public spaces in Federal Way. Ferrell told KIRO 7 the ordinance was a direct response to the investigation aired in February. It’s the only ordinance of its kind anywhere in the state, and it passed the City Council on Tuesday, May 3, unanimously.

“We need to make sure that people that come and go from Federal Way and drivers that come and go are safe,” he said. “When we get a 911 call either from a rider or a driver, or anyone that’s aware of this dangerous and reckless behavior, our police can come in and intervene and make sure that we can remove that person from a bus.”

That is something law enforcement in other parts of the county has been criticized for not making a priority. The new ordinance makes the “reckless use of fentanyl in enclosed public spaces” a gross misdemeanor, which is now punishable by up to 364 days in jail, a \$5,000 fine or both.

Ferrell and the Council also discussed offering treatment options to people who are contacted or arrested by officers.

Recently, Metro’s CEO made a public statement claiming that fentanyl smoke was not as hazardous as drivers and riders feared. He made the statements during Metro’s “Share & Care: Substance Use Disorder” Zoom meeting in March.

“We understand employees have concerns about secondhand smoke from illegal and legal substance on our public transit system,” White said. “County Public Health has provided data from studies conducted by the FDA that concluded that secondhand smoke exposure does not show up as a positive drug screening and will not get you high,” he said, adding “In addition, KN-95 masks that we’ve come to know as helping to reduce the spread of COVID also filter chemical and other biological particles that are transmitted by air. We continue to provide these masks at all worksites to our employees.”

Metro declined an on-camera interview with KIRO 7, but when we asked for the data and the studies that White had cited, they sent us several sources.

Some were studies about fentanyl exhaled by surgical patients. Others discussed the risk of first-responders to people suffering overdose symptoms from using fentanyl. KIRO 7 asked several medical experts familiar with illicit drug abuse to review the material. None of the studies specifically described the effect of fentanyl or other opioid fumes on people in an enclosed space.

Dr. Scott Phillips from Washington Poison Center was also quoted in a Public Health/Seattle/King County blog post on April 5, discounting the potential harm of secondary fentanyl smoke.

Since the trend of smoking fentanyl seems to have happened within the last year, some of the experts contacted by KIRO 7 suggested that formal studies on the fumes generated by burning the blue pills commonly available on the streets of Seattle have not likely happened yet.

“I’ve seen otherwise in my career. I don’t believe that to be correct,” said Shoreline Paramedic Captain Gabe DeBay, when he reviewed the conclusions Metro had reached, and read the studies it cited.

	<p>“I’ve been in the line of work for 20 years. I teach this to firefighters, EMTs, paramedics. I see people dropping every single day — from fumes that they ingested. But those are the same fumes that are burning on buses, burning in public spaces and can go into the people sitting next to them.”</p> <p>When asked if he believed incidental exposure to secondary fentanyl smoke should be regarded as dangerous, DeBay responded: “Extremely dangerous. It’s the smoke from the pill that has not been inhaled.”</p> <p>Driver Erik Christensen said he has written to Metro executives, requesting to lend his frontline input to their Safety Committee to consider new strategies to prevent secondhand exposure.</p> <p>“I’m not asking for much,” he said. “I’m asking to be involved with something that’s affecting my health, my mental well-being and the health and well-being of my passengers. And I’m being told no.”</p> <p>Christensen likened the daily risk to other common workplaces.</p> <p>“Imagine if you went to work one morning and there sitting on your desk was a person smoking fentanyl. And your boss comes up and says ‘Don’t worry about it, let ‘em do that.’ And it makes you cough and choke. You’d want something done,” he said.</p> <p>“This all belongs to everybody who’s a taxpayer, a voter, a rider of the system,” he said. “They are the ones who ultimately are in control and in charge.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Tacoma to clear sprawling homeless camp
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/sprawling-homeless-encampment-tacoma-be-cleared-out/F4EGYCZYB5AMVLS754HGDYRHUE/
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — The City of Tacoma says a sprawling homeless encampment in the Hilltop neighborhood has become a safety hazard. Therefore, in a couple of weeks, crews will remove tents and clean up the streets.</p> <p>It’s estimated 40 people are now living outside in structures near People’s Park. The tents aren’t confined to a single area and are instead spread out between South 9th and South 11th Street and along MLK and M Street.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the city tells KIRO 7 the decision to take action was fueled by the high number of calls for service linked to the area. Data shows, in the first three months of 2022, there were 243 calls for service. For that same time period in 2021, there were only about 60 calls documented.</p> <p>Within that 243 total, there were 23 for fires, 21 for shots fired, 16 welfare checks and 10 medical aid requests.</p> <p>Some restaurants along S 11th Street say the encampments have been hurting their bottom line. Head chef Brandon Barrios at Bar Rosa tells us despite big praise for their wood-fired pies, people have been hesitant to come in.</p> <p>“We’ve had people write food blogs about us and one of the first things they say in the first couple paragraphs is all about what’s going on across the street,” said Barrios. “People are writing about how they should be cautious when they come here: come in pairs, don’t come at night if you’re a single female.”</p> <p>Encampments will not be cleared out until May 18. According to a city news release: “Although our encampment removal policy allows a 72-hour posting, we will implement a two-week posting period to allow for increased connection to shelter.”</p>

	The Homeless Engagement and Alternatives Liaison Team (HEAL Team) meantime will continue to visit the location and offer outreach. The city says the HEAL Team has been doing that since March.
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HEADLINE	05/05 Coast Guard busy during cruise season
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/coast-guard-keeping-busy-during-cruise-season/RZOAW5NC6BFZXIHTLVZR35NJJ/
GIST	<p>It's not rescue missions, but the Coast Guard is keeping busy during cruise season.</p> <p>Members are conducting safety inspections on every cruise ship at port in Seattle to help keep every voyage safe.</p> <p>Before a cruise can take off from Seattle, they need to check off all the safety boxes for the Coast Guard.</p> <p>Just like flight attendants, cruise crews also need to know what to do in case of emergency.</p> <p>"Large vessels are legally required to be inspected yearly. That's exactly what happened on Thursday, when members from the sector Puget Sound inspection team put crew members to the test," said Petty Officer Steve Strohmaier.</p> <p>Inspectors assess whether crews are able to respond to major emergencies, like fire.</p> <p>The Coast Guard watches how the crew responds to a mock fire drill, following international standards.</p> <p>The fire must be isolated, electrical power and ventilation must be secured, and the crew must determine how far the fire goes before abandoning ship.</p> <p>The Coast Guard will also look over every part of the ship, including the emergency systems, alarms and lifeboats.</p> <p>"If these vessels weren't inspected, the safety gear could just kind of rot away, or the crews might lose their skills to actually respond in case of emergencies," Strohmaier said.</p> <p>The Coast Guard also says boats of all sizes should go through the same process, making sure every part of your boat is good to go before you head out on the water.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 So many pets, not enough vets
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/so-many-pets-not-enough-vets-united-states-faces-veterinarian-shortage
GIST	<p>If you've tried to make an appointment with your veterinarian, you've most likely been told it will be a long time before your pet can be seen.</p> <p>"There is a national shortage of veterinarians and licensed technicians, and people are waiting weeks - even months to get appointments," says Dr. Gail Schroder, the Oregon Veterinarian Medical Association president.</p> <p>New research from Mars Veterinary Health shows that meeting the projected health care needs of U.S. pets in 2030 will require more than 41,000 vets to enter the companion animal practice over the next ten years.</p> <p>With an average of 2,500-2,600 graduates becoming veterinarians each year, there is an estimated 15,000 veterinarian shortage for animals across America by 2030.</p> <p>That shortage is already being seen now.</p>

Dr. Schroder adds it is the same challenges that other businesses face as well.

"It takes time to train new veterinarians and licensed technicians, but when it comes to support staff, we're competing with every other business that is trying to hire people and struggling to do that, and that makes us struggle even more to find the staff that we need," said Dr. Schroder. "Our productivity, our efficiency was slowed down in order to follow health and safety guidelines of the pandemic, and now we're playing catch-up, just trying to get all of those animals in."

Schroder thinks that people who were at home during the pandemic got to spend more time with their pets and realized they weren't getting the care they needed, and are scheduling more visits.

Like the research from Mars shows, it doesn't look like the problem is going away too soon.

"I wish I could tell you it's something we could fix quickly. I wish that we could snap our fingers and make things get caught up. The truth is, we are probably going to be overwhelmed for some time. It just takes time to get the staff that we need, get everyone trained, and get things working efficiently. I suspect that we are going to be having trouble getting people in as fast as we'd like to for some time to come" says Schroder.

But vets say there are things that can help, like preventative care.

"Do everything you can to keep your pet healthy. Keep them up-to-date on their flea control and their heartworm preventative, keep them on a leash when they're outside, and maybe don't take that 15-year-old Golden Retriever for the first hike of its life next weekend," says Schroder.

Also - be patient.

"Be patient with us, knowing that this is hard on us as well. And, we do know that folks are struggling - and we're struggling too. But we're doing the best we can," says Schroder

Veterinarians have the highest rates of suicide in the medical field, and twice the turnover and retirement rates of physicians, vets citing a poor life-work balance.

"It's a tough job emotionally and physically. Those of us who get into this field because we love animals and care deeply about providing care for creatures that can't always stand up for themselves, so there's a real emotional component that comes to it."

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HEADLINE	05/05 High diesel price squeezes truck drivers
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/nation-world/rising-price-of-diesel-could-lead-to-fewer-trucks-on-the-road-truckers-trucking-driver-shortage-supply-chain-inflation-oil-gas
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (TND) — High gas prices continue to be a major frustration for many Americans. The national average for a gallon of regular gas has climbed back up to \$4.24 and it doesn't look like it will be going down anytime soon.</p> <p>At the same time, the rising cost of diesel fuel is putting a squeeze on truck drivers. According to AAA, the national average of diesel hit an all-time high of \$5.47 per gallon Thursday.</p> <p>Some are having to park their big rigs while others are just cutting the routes altogether. Many say if this trend continues, small trucking companies across the country could go under, putting more pressure on the nation's strained supply chain.</p> <p>Companies like Herlache Truck Lines are hemorrhaging money. This month alone, they paid roughly \$25,000 more for fuel than last year.</p>

If fuel expense stays as high as it has been for the past two months, our annual budget for fuel is going to be up by \$300,000. We're going to spend almost \$1 million on fuel this year," the company's president, Tom Herlache, said.

The [skyrocketing diesel prices](#) are further crippling the trucking industry, which has already been hobbled by a driver shortage. About 800,000 truck drivers leave the profession each year and rising diesel prices could push more out.

"With fuel being a very big expense, it's hard. It's hard on the whole industry," truck driver Brian Eichinger said.

These trucks move around [72% of all U.S. goods](#), according to the American Trucking Association. Fewer trucks could lead to fewer products on store shelves.

"Almost everything we buy comes to us on a vehicle that burns diesel fuel," said Mark Schieldrop with AAA Northeast.

Many factors are driving up the price of diesel with the [war in Ukraine](#) being a big one. The [European Union](#) on Wednesday called for a ban on Russian imports.

AAA is reporting the cost of diesel fuel is up more than \$2 from last year, possibly prompting some smaller trucking companies to hire fewer drivers but others may eventually be forced to shut down altogether.

"It's really putting a hurting on my business because I own the truck, a bunch of my friends own trucks and it's really been putting a hurting on the money we're making because it's almost costing us money to drive," another driver told The National Desk.

Some congressional leaders say a long-term solution is to seek [energy independence](#) but until ideas are put into action, analysts say Americans could be paying more than \$4 a gallon throughout the entire summer.

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HEADLINE	05/05 Protesters plan Saturday rally in Tacoma
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article261129497.html
GIST	<p>After a draft opinion of a U.S. Supreme Court case on abortion rights leaked Monday that suggests the court could overturn Roe v. Wade, protesters have taken to the streets across the United States and in Western Washington to protest.</p> <p>In Tacoma, people are planning to rally for abortion rights Saturday outside the U.S. District Courthouse at 1717 Pacific Ave. downtown. The rally, "Tacoma Stands Up for Reproductive Justice," is being organized by the Tacoma Democratic Socialists of America and Serve the People Tacoma, a mutual aid program.</p> <p>After the Monday night leak, first reported by Politico, hundreds of people gathered the next day on the Capitol Campus in Olympia to show support for abortion rights. Similar protests have taken place in Seattle, Bellingham, Vancouver and other states.</p> <p>The rally in Tacoma is to begin at 11 a.m.</p> <p>"Our rights should not be up for debate," Serve the People Tacoma said in a tweet sharing information about the rally. "It is time for us to show elected officials and each other the power we have when we come together in true solidarity!"</p> <p>Representatives from Serve the People Tacoma and Tacoma DSA were not immediately available to comment.</p>

HEADLINE	05/05 Seattle debates police hiring bonuses
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-city-council-debates-police-hiring-bonuses-as-mayor-harrell-plans-to-introduce-his-own-plan/
GIST	<p>Members of the Seattle City Council and Mayor Bruce Harrell agree that the city needs to fund staffing incentives for the Seattle Police Department — but not on how to do it.</p> <p>Councilmember and Public Safety and Human Services Committee Chair Lisa Herbold, freshman citywide Councilmember Sara Nelson, and Harrell are looking at unspent SPD salary dollars to fund their own versions of staffing incentives.</p> <p>The 2022 budget, passed in November, included a \$355.5 million police budget, enough to fund all current officers plus an additional 125 hires, and a budget proviso that prohibits the department from spending any excess funds derived from unfilled positions.</p> <p>Since the first of the year, the department has seen more employees leaving and fewer hires than expected, changing council’s projection to assume the department will only net 98 of the 125 funded hires this year. If only 98 hires are made, the council’s central staff predicts about \$4.5 million in unspent salary and benefit funds will remain untouched in the SPD budget.</p> <p>The mayor and some council members want to use at least part of that money to pay hiring bonuses or other incentives to bolster the department’s staff.</p> <p>In an ordinance discussed in the Public Safety and Human Services Committee last week, Herbold wants to tweak the proviso, lifting it to allow the department to use up to \$650,000 in salary savings for hiring bonuses.</p> <p>Nelson is sponsoring a similar but broader approach.</p> <p>First, Nelson’s resolution would lift the restriction and free the full amount of salary funds to cover staffing incentives for the department.</p> <p>Then, under a subsequent council bill by Nelson, the city would allow that money to be used for staffing incentives for current city employees moving to the SPD, new recruits and reimbursement of moving expenses.</p> <p>“We are clearly dealing with a public safety emergency, we don’t have enough officers to deal with it, and we need to use every tool in our toolbox to accelerate the hiring of our officers,” Nelson said in the committee meeting.</p> <p>Herbold questioned the approach during the committee meeting.</p> <p>“My concern would be if we were to fully lift the proviso, we would be releasing all of those funds to the Seattle Police Department,” Herbold said. “And maybe some of them should stay there, as I’m proposing to do, but we need to have a conversation between the department and the council.”</p> <p>Both items are scheduled to be voted on in Tuesday’s committee meeting, and would go to the full council for a final vote if approved in committee.</p> <p>But a third option may still be introduced by the mayor.</p> <p>After Nelson this week touted approval for her plan from the mayor and Senior Deputy Mayor Monisha Harrell, a spokesperson for Harrell confirmed Wednesday that the mayor and deputy mayor had spoken to Nelson and “generally” encouraged providing pay incentives but never endorsed her specific legislation.</p>

	<p>“As Mayor Harrell develops a comprehensive plan to address SPD recruiting, we have consistently said we will work together with council to pursue solutions,” Mayor’s Office Communications Director Jamie Housen said Wednesday. “We are grateful Councilmembers Herbold and Nelson are looking at options to fund incentives to hire more officers.”</p> <p>The administration would not commit to either Nelson or Herbold’s plan but instead suggested Harrell, who promised to improve SPD staffing during his campaign, would introduce a third approach that would give him the authority to implement hiring incentives.</p> <p>“The mayor would support authority from the Council to include incentives as part of his comprehensive recruitment strategy, including more specifically targeted incentives like a relocation bonus and education benefits,” Housen said. “Our goal is to forge a collaborative solution with the Council that achieves this.” The mayor’s office is “still evaluating” the amount of money that would be used in its version of the plan, according to Housen, but intends to ask the council to remove the proviso.</p> <p>“The comprehensive hiring plan the Mayor’s Office is working on is specific to SPD and addressing the historic staffing challenges facing our Seattle Police Department,” Housen said Thursday, adding that Harrell’s plan would draw from SPD’s unspent salary funds. “These funds are under proviso, which requires Council vote to authorize their use.”</p> <p>While the mayor’s office has not submitted any legislation to the council, according to central staff, Housen said the mayor’s plan hiring plan would be shared “before summer.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Boeing moving headquarters to Virginia
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/boeing-reportedly-moving-headquarters-to-virginia/
GIST	<p>Boeing is moving its corporate headquarters from Chicago to the Washington, D.C., area, the company announced Thursday.</p> <p>In a statement, Boeing CEO Dave Calhoun said the move to the company’s existing government relations campus in Arlington, Virginia, “makes strategic sense ... given its proximity to our customers and stakeholders.”</p> <p>The shift to the D.C. area moves Boeing’s top leadership close to key government officials and lawmakers in the nation’s capital.</p> <p>Arlington is the home of Boeing’s major customer on the defense side: the Pentagon.</p> <p>And following the tightening of government safety oversight after the MAX crashes, the commercial airplanes division increasingly must work closely with Federal Aviation Administration leadership in D.C. and with lawmakers in the U.S. House and Senate.</p> <p>The choice of Virginia dashes the hopes of many in the Pacific Northwest that Boeing, facing a litany of troubles that have sunk the company’s fortunes, might consider moving back to Seattle.</p> <p>Aviation analyst Richard Aboulafia, of Aerodynamic Advisory, said the FAA would have been more impressed by a return to Seattle, signaling a focus on fixing the huge challenges Boeing faces in its major business of making commercial airplanes.</p> <p>“Boeing’s problem is not with government relations,” he said. “I don’t see doubling down the emphasis on D.C. lobbying as a breakthrough moment. It looks like a recipe for more of the same.”</p>

“Boeing’s pressing need is to restore technical excellence in its most important and neglected business unit, commercial airplanes,” Aboulafia added. “A move back to Seattle would have sent an incredibly powerful message. This is a missed opportunity.”

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., chair of the House Committee on Transportation, agreed, calling the headquarters move to Arlington “another step in the wrong direction.”

“Boeing’s problem isn’t a lack of access to government, but rather its ongoing production problems and the failures of management and the board that led to the fatal crashes of the 737 MAX,” DeFazio said in a statement. “Boeing should focus on making safe airplanes — not lobbying federal regulators and Congress.”

A former senior Boeing executive, who asked for anonymity to maintain relations with those inside the company, questioned the timing of the move.

“Now is the time when the company ought to be thinking of getting back to its roots,” the executive said. “Making an announcement now that has nothing to do with running the company or fixing its problems is puzzling.”

Easing the decision, which was first reported Thursday morning by The Wall Street Journal, the tax incentives the city of Chicago provided Boeing for going there expired in 2021.

In addition, the Chicago office tower headquarters has been largely empty for the past two years during the COVID-19 pandemic as top leaders and most of the staff worked from home and held virtual meetings.

The pandemic’s massive impact on the company’s business has forced Boeing to sell off real estate, including the Boeing commercial airplanes headquarters in Renton, and to implement virtual work options for many white-collar employees.

Calhoun said part of the context for the move is Boeing “taking steps to be more efficient within a reduced footprint.”

Adding engineers in D.C.

Boeing said that in addition to setting up its global headquarters in Arlington, it also “plans to develop a research & technology hub in the area to harness and attract engineering and technical capabilities.”

That hub will work on “innovations in the areas of cyber security, autonomous operations, quantum sciences and software and systems engineering,” Boeing said.

“The future of Boeing is digital,” said Greg Hyslop, Boeing executive vice president and chief engineer, who added that the company is banking on digital innovation to fuel the new, cutting-edge capabilities.

“This new hub in Northern Virginia will follow the successful implementation of this technology strategy in other regions,” he said.

Ray Goforth, executive director of Boeing’s white-collar union, the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace, said this continues the company strategy of geographically dispersing its engineering talent.

In addition to the Puget Sound region, Boeing now has engineering hubs in North Charleston, South Carolina; St. Louis; Seal Beach, California; as well as India. Its engineering centers in Moscow and Kyiv are currently closed due to the war in Ukraine.

With aviation beginning to recover from the pandemic downturn, Boeing has been aggressively hiring. Union data shows the company added 446 local SPEEA engineers since the middle of last year.

While Goforth acknowledges that there is a lot of engineering and technical talent in Virginia, close to the Pentagon, he said Boeing's strategy of separating engineers from where the products they design are manufactured hasn't worked out well.

"The engineers lose the interactions with those who face the day-to-day problems," he said. "Time has shown, you lose some fidelity there."

Chicago move a failure

Boeing's move to Chicago in 2001 from its historical Seattle location ripped apart the company's legacy in the Pacific Northwest.

The decision to leave Chicago makes clear that move 21 years ago has proved a major flop.

There was never any real rationale offered for choosing Chicago that made sense for the company's business. Boeing's then-CEO, Phil Condit, and its president, Harry Stonecipher, said at the time they wanted the headquarters relocated to a city set apart from Boeing's main business units.

Aboulafia ridiculed the notion that such corporate separation, pioneered by Jack Welch at GE, would lead to clear-eyed investment decisions.

"Let's move somewhere unconnected with our business and our customers. What could go wrong?" he said derisively.

Chicago won against bids from Denver and Dallas. Boeing insiders said later it appealed to the egos of Condit and Stonecipher as a major city of commerce with a macho, steakhouse culture for executives. The city's offer of as much as \$20 million in tax incentives over two decades sealed the decision.

The new headquarters quickly was seen as an ivory tower, separated from the realities and complexities of the work that produced the airplanes and the technology that determined the company's fate.

The skyscraper location in downtown Chicago was also a corporate aerie that separated the top executives from their employees.

Many in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere grew alienated by what they saw as cold decisions about their lives made from afar without much apparent concern about the consequences for individuals.

With the succession of missteps by Boeing's leadership in the past three years, that distance from the work began to look increasingly untenable.

With the real work of building aerospace products done elsewhere around the country, only just over 400 people out of a total Boeing workforce of more than 140,000 are based in Chicago, many of them working remotely.

Boeing said the Chicago head count won't decrease a lot as the top leaders and their administrative staff head to D.C. And with many of those in Chicago working remotely on a permanent basis, Boeing said it will give up some floors of the building it occupies.

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HEADLINE	05/05 King Co. median home price nears \$1M
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/king-county-median-home-price-nears-1m-but-the-market-shows-signs-of-cooling/
GIST	The median home price in King County soared to a record high of nearly \$1 million last month, a statistic that underscores vanishing housing affordability and the worsening economic gulf in the Seattle area.

But that number alone doesn't reflect other factors hinting at a different trend: The local housing market may be beginning to cool.

King, Pierce and Snohomish counties saw fewer new listings of single-family homes for sale, more listings still on the market at the end of the month and fewer pending home sales in April than the same time last year, according to new data released Thursday by the Northwest Multiple Listing Service. And it would take slightly longer in all three counties to sell through all the homes for sale at current demand than it would have the previous month, all pointing to a less frenzied market.

Those trends echo predictions by national and local economists that, because of rising mortgage rates and other factors, housing markets across the country were unlikely to continue the breakneck pace of growth seen since the pandemic began. The average mortgage rate for 30-year fixed mortgages is at about 5.3% this week, the highest point since 2009, according to Freddie Mac.

"Things do seem to be leveling off," said Kristina Loper, a Keller Williams agent in Tacoma.

Still, prices are up and some buyers are still facing competition. "The haves are more likely to get the house than ones trying to get their foot in the door," Loper said.

The median single-family home in King County sold for \$995,000 in April, up 7% from a month earlier and 20% from last April. Just before the housing bubble burst, the median single-family home in King County sold for \$481,000 in July 2007, according to past Seattle Times reports. (Median means half of homes sold for more and half sold for less.)

King County's priciest homes are selling on the Eastside, where the median home price last month hit \$1.7 million. In Seattle, the median home sold for about \$1 million. The median home price was \$660,000 in Southwest King County and \$780,000 in Southeast King County.

The median Snohomish County home sold for \$839,298, the median Pierce County home sold for \$579,980 and the median Kitsap County home sold for \$565,000. Prices in those counties were up 4% to 5% from March and up 15% to 24% from last year.

One key caveat is that those price figures reflect closed sales, which mostly took place about a month earlier. The prices for most sales that went pending in April will be included in next month's data.

"I'm not seeing 10-plus offers like I did back in March," said Ally Bosak, a John L. Scott agent in Bothell. "But having said that, the buyer pool is still very large and multiple offers are very much happening in certain neighborhoods."

Sarah Zhang and Andrew Gapic found a tough market when they went searching earlier this year.

Hoping to find space to work from home and eventually have room for a child, the couple set out to find a three-bedroom home somewhere in Seattle for around \$700,000. It didn't take long to realize that was "completely impossible," Gapic said.

Zhang and Gapic, who both work in tech, tapped their savings and stocks, upped their budget closer to \$1 million, started looking at town homes and braced for competition.

"We talked to our lender and figured out what our max, max price was, then filtered for listings \$200,000 under that. That was the buffer it would take to win," Zhang said.

The couple lost out to other buyers on several offers before getting a modern town home between the Leschi and Mount Baker neighborhoods listed at \$900,000. The couple paid \$990,000 and closed in March.

“We were truly on the cusp of going back to renting,” Gagic said. “At some points, we were like, ‘Should we just stop looking and look later when we have more money?’ ”

Cyrus Fiene, a Coldwell Banker Bain agent in South Lake Union, argues low supply continues to create a tight market, made worse by recent investors and homeowners who locked in low rates earlier in the pandemic and now are hesitant to sell.

“The only solution to this situation is new housing and that’s not an overnight solution,” he said.

But brokers are also seeing some signs of a cool-down.

Loper, in Tacoma, listed a “great town house” in University Place that only drew one offer.

“I was shocked,” she said.

Bosak recently listed a spacious five-bedroom home in Everett at \$1.2 million that attracted no offers by the date the seller planned to review them. According to Bosak, when she started calling buyers’ agents, “the feedback was they thought this would be a multiple-offer situation that would go dramatically over the list price. The buyers were scared of offering, just burned out,” she said. The home eventually sold for more than the list price, Bosak said.

In King County, the number of pending sales dipped 5% from March to April. They were down 15% from the same time last year and 17% from April 2019, before the pandemic. Sales typically pick up throughout the spring and peak around May.

Fewer King County condos are selling, too. The median price stood at \$518,000, down 4% from March but up about 13% from the same time last year.

Across King, Snohomish, Pierce and Kitsap counties, it would take between two and three weeks to sell all of the single-family homes for sale at current demand, based on a measure known as months of inventory. That’s a bit more breathing room than in March, when it would have taken two weeks or less. At the same time, that is far below the four to six months the listing service once considered a balanced market.

It’s not just Seattle. Nationally, pending home sales and new listings are both down compared with the same time last year, and more homes are posting price drops, according to data from Redfin.

Lawrence Yun, chief economist for the National Association of Realtors, told a recent industry meeting that inflation, rising fuel prices and higher mortgage rates will make homes less affordable and slow the market.

The full effects of those factors in Western Washington remain to be seen. Rising mortgage rates may not drive down prices but typically result in fewer home sales, according to a historical comparison by Windermere chief economist Matthew Gardner.

Fiene said he expects homes to stay on the market longer even if prices don’t drop. But, he said, “it hasn’t been long enough that they’ve gone up for us to feel the effects yet.”

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HEADLINE	05/05 US intel before Ukraine sank Russia ship
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation-politics/official-us-gave-intel-before-ukraine-sank-russian-warship/
GIST	WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. says it shared intelligence with Ukraine about the location of the Russian missile cruiser Moskva prior to the strike that sank the warship, an incident that was a high-profile failure for Russia’s military.

	<p>An American official said Thursday that Ukraine alone decided to target and sink the flagship of Russia's Black Sea Fleet using its own anti-ship missiles. But given Russia's attacks on the Ukrainian coastline from the sea, the U.S. has provided "a range of intelligence" that includes locations of those ships, said the official, who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.</p> <p>The Biden administration has ramped up intelligence sharing with Ukraine alongside the shipment of arms and missiles to help it repel Russia's invasion. The disclosure of U.S. support in the Moskva strike comes as the White House is under pressure from Republicans to do more to support Ukraine's resistance and as polls suggest Americans question whether President Joe Biden is being tough enough on Russia.</p> <p>Since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion in February, the White House has tried to balance supporting Ukraine, a democratic ally, against not doing anything that would seem to provoke a direct war between Putin and the U.S. and NATO allies. As the war has gone on, the White House has ramped up its military and intelligence support, removing some time and geographic limits on what it will tell Ukraine about potential Russian targets.</p> <p>The official who spoke Thursday said the U.S. was not aware that Ukraine planned to strike the Moskva until after they conducted the operation. NBC News first reported on the American role in the sinking of the ship.</p> <p>Speaking earlier Thursday after a New York Times report about the U.S. role in supporting Ukraine's killing of Russian generals, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said American agencies "do not provide intelligence on the location of senior military leaders on the battlefield or participate in the targeting decisions of the Ukrainian military."</p> <p>"Ukraine combines information that we and other partners provide with the intel that they themselves are gathering and then they make their own decisions and they take their own actions," Kirby said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Sounders CCL title Seattle, MLS a big deal?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/sports/sounders/analysis-how-big-of-a-deal-is-ccl-title-for-seattle-and-mls-and-whats-next-for-sounders/
GIST	<p>The oddest part about the historic moment the Sounders FC crafted Wednesday is how misunderstood the CONCACAF Champions League title is when it comes to its place in the sports landscape.</p> <p>"It's unique for American sports," Sounders majority owner Adrian Hanauer said. "There's nothing like it. It's complicated, but I think it's super cool. This idea that is going on all over the world, in South America with Copa Libertadores, in Europe and Africa and Asia. I'm hopeful that over time, our fans will actually grow to appreciate it and understand it and embrace it the way we soccer nerds have."</p> <p>Sounders striker Raul Ruidiaz's brace led the club to a 3-0 win against Pumas UNAM in the second leg of the CCL final at Lumen Field on Wednesday. The 5-2 aggregate scoring, after a 2-2 draw in the opening leg last week in Mexico City, was enough to crown Seattle the 2022 regional champion — a first for the Sounders and an MLS team since the tournament was revamped to its current format in 2008.</p> <p>Seattle being the history maker for the U.S. could be the best-case scenario for soccer's growth in America. The Sounders have enough proven success and likable aspects to carry the sport forward.</p> <p>CONCACAF CEO Philippe Moggio's mission is to cultivate "sustainable long-term growth of football in this region."</p> <p>For that to happen, not only does the quality on the field have to be superior across the region, even the casual soccer fan must know the hierarchy of the sport. For example, no one in the U.S. would equate the Super Bowl with the Fiesta Bowl even though they're both bowls.</p>

“We’re very excited for how this competition has progressed,” Moggio said, noting the CCL will expand from 16 teams to 27 next year. “In order to grow that, we need to continue to grow our competitions, grow our fan bases and grow our commercial programs.

“To have a growing club competition that is running every year and ensuring that the teams that are participating understand the importance of this competition, that it provides a path to qualify for the FIFA Club World Cup, that has helped us really continue to raise the visibility.”

With all the cups and tournaments, it can be difficult to realize the significance of each. There’s the Heritage Cup awarded only between the San Jose Earthquakes and Sounders dating back to 1974 when both were part of the disbanded North American Soccer League (NASL). The Cascadia Cup is given by supporters’ groups for Pacific Northwest clubs Vancouver Whitecaps FC, Portland Timbers and the Sounders. The next tier in the trophy case is the amateur U.S. Open Cup then MLS Cup.

A rung up the ladder for a club in this region is the Champions League title, which grants a berth to the FIFA Club World Cup — the highest any club in the world can go.

The Sounders are the first to clinch a spot while UEFA Champions League will crown Liverpool FC or Real Madrid its winner on May 28. The other winners will come from Asia’s AFC Champions League, Africa’s CAF Champions League, South America’s Copa Libertadores, and Oceania’s OFC Champions League.

“We’re going to play Real Madrid or Liverpool in a real game,” a euphoric Garth Lagerwey, the Sounders president of soccer and general manager, told reporters Wednesday. “This is what you do it for. It’s amazing; it just is. I’d love to be real cool and calm and be like, ‘ah, it’s no big deal,’ but it’s a big deal. ... I want to make this (MLS) one of the best leagues in the world and if we can do that, we can play meaningful games against these teams.”

Destination unknown

FIFA announced plans in 2019 to expand the Club World Cup single-elimination format to 24 teams, including the host nation, and play in China the summer of 2021. The pandemic scrapped the debut of a revised tournament but possibly not the concept.

According to recent [reporting from The New York Times](#) and Sporting News, the global governing body hasn’t made any decisions regarding whether or when the 2022 champions from the traditional six confederations would play each other for the trophy.

“No clue,” is what a text message to The New York Times read regarding the Sounders’ Club World Cup future.

If there are bets to be made about the prestigious tourney, put money on Lagerwey trying and succeeding to force some version to happen — even if Seattle must host the event. That would be a letdown because not only would hosting technically make the Sounders a possible automatic qualifier anyway, the lure of breaking into this posh party is international travel to play against the world’s heavyweights.

Seattle has already hosted English Premier League powers Manchester United (2011) and Chelsea FC (2009, 2012) and La Liga giant FC Barcelona (2009) at Lumen Field for friendlies (exhibition matches). Each of those teams won at least one Club World Cup.

The event would still be a spectacular show given the teams would surely play their stars the bulk of the 90 minutes (Lionel Messi was subbed off in the 46th minute when he scored a brace for Barcelona in the 4-0 shutout against the Sounders). But the Sounders organization providing the total experience of a massive global tournament it’s never participated in is unrealistic. The Club World Cup will already be used to prepare for the 2026 FIFA men’s World Cup, should Seattle be named a host city.

	<p>FIFA won't hold the Club World Cup in December as it has done in the past because of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Chelsea won the 2021 Club World Cup title in February in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, because of altered scheduling amid the pandemic.</p> <p>Hanauer doesn't know when FIFA will announce the cities for the 2026 World Cup in the U.S., Mexico and Canada. There were multiple representatives at Wednesday's CCL match.</p> <p>"What we assume is the decision is coming in weeks to weeks; that could be 100 weeks or that could be four weeks," Hanauer said. "We want the World Cup in Seattle. We really do and we think that we're very well positioned to do it and our fans (Wednesday) put an exclamation point on that."</p> <p>The Sounders plan to raise a CCL banner in the Lumen Field rafters on July 9 when the team hosts Portland.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 FDA limits J&J shot; rare blood clots
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/05/05/fda-johnson-and-johnson-vaccine/
GIST	<p>The Food and Drug Administration imposed new restrictions Thursday on the Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccine, saying the risk of a rare and life-threatening blood clot syndrome outweighed the benefits of the vaccine for people who are 18 or older and can get another shot, unless they would otherwise remain unvaccinated.</p> <p>The FDA said only people who are unable to receive other vaccines because they are not accessible or clinically appropriate, or because individuals refused to get a different vaccine, should receive the Johnson & Johnson shot.</p> <p>The Johnson & Johnson vaccine has been associated with a rare but potentially deadly blood clotting and bleeding syndrome called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS). The condition usually occurs within one to two weeks of vaccination, and a commonly used treatment to address clotting, heparin, can cause additional harm.</p> <p>"This is not a new safety signal – it is based on updated information showing that it is a persistent safety signal," Peter Marks, the FDA's top vaccine official, said in an interview. He said other, safer vaccines that can be used to inoculate people against the coronavirus.</p> <p>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials in December already recommended that other vaccines should be used instead of the Johnson & Johnson shot, but an additional analysis persuaded the FDA to make major changes to the vaccine's emergency use authorization, which stipulates how the shot can be used.</p> <p>About 18.7 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine have been administered in the United States, compared with 340.6 million of the Pfizer-BioNTech shots and 217.5 million Moderna shots.</p> <p>The Johnson & Johnson vaccine was authorized in February 2021, a one-shot vaccine that proponents hoped would ease the logistics of vaccination campaigns globally. The vaccine was somewhat less effective in its clinical trial than the messenger RNA vaccines authorized in 2020, and instantly became the butt of jokes and memes portraying it as a lesser vaccine.</p> <p>Public health officials attempted to convey the message that the vaccines were all valuable and touted the benefits of a one-shot regimen. But Johnson & Johnson shots were paused in April 2021 as federal health officials investigated reports of the rare but concerning blood clotting syndrome. The vaccine campaign was restarted, but manufacturing and supply problems also slowed the rollout.</p>

An updated analysis of safety data through March 18 found that there have been 60 confirmed cases of the blood-clotting syndrome, including nine that resulted in death. Even with quick treatment, vaccine recipients can rapidly worsen, with long-term health consequences.

The FDA said there were 3.23 cases of the clotting syndrome per million doses of vaccine administered and 0.48 deaths per million doses of vaccine administered.

“That is not what we expect from our prophylactic vaccines in the United States,” said Marks, director of the FDA’s Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research.

In a statement, Johnson & Johnson emphasized that this was not a new risk “and does not reflect a change in the rate of cases observed.” It added that “data continue to support a favorable benefit-risk profile for the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine in adults, when compared with no vaccine.”

Marks said regulators had hoped they could find a “mitigation strategy” – a way to determine who was most likely to have the rare blood clots after the vaccine, and to avoid giving them the shot. “But that has not happened,” Marks said. The only pattern that has been found is that the complication seems much less likely to occur in people 65 and older, he said.

Marks added that the FDA’s action should not be a source of concern for people who previously received the vaccine.

“This is a complication that occurs within a week or two, at most three weeks,” Marks said.

People who could still consider the shot include those who have an anaphylactic reaction to messenger RNA vaccines, or people who would otherwise not be vaccinated.

As part of its action, the FDA updated its fact sheets for health-care providers and for vaccine recipients and caregivers.

The agency said in its fact sheet for health-care providers that about 15% of the blood clot cases have been fatal.

“Cases of TTS following administration of the [Johnson & Johnson] COVID-19 Vaccine have been reported in males and females, in a wide age range of individuals 18 years and older, with the highest reporting rate (approximately 8 cases per 1,000,000 doses administered) in females ages 30-49 years,” the FDA said.

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HEADLINE	05/05 Hong Kong relaxes, Beijing eases rules
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/hong-kong-reopens-beaches-beijing-relaxes-quarantine-rules/
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — Hong Kong reopened beaches and pools and relaxed other pandemic restrictions Thursday, a day after China’s capital, Beijing, announced it would ease its tough quarantine rules for arrivals from overseas.</p> <p>The two Chinese cities are at opposite ends of COVID-19 outbreaks. Hong Kong is emerging from by far its deadliest wave, which killed 9,000 people. In Beijing, a new wave is just beginning and authorities have imposed a series of restrictions on residents to try to snuff it out.</p> <p>The easing of quarantine requirements was a reminder that China does want eventually to back off from its strict “zero-COVID” approach that is imposing growing economic and human costs, though officials have shown no inclination to do so in a meaningful way anytime soon.</p>

In Hong Kong, the rising costs have sparked a backlash against “zero COVID.” The city closed water sports venues during its outbreak of the highly transmissible omicron variant, but has been reducing restrictions as cases decline. Deaths from COVID-19 have fallen from a high of almost 300 per day in March to zero in recent days.

Restaurants are also allowed to seat up to eight customers per table — up from four previously — and masks will no longer be required during outdoor exercise, a change that’s important to organizers of group sporting events.

“We’re looking forward to Mother’s Day, and being able to have up to eight people sitting at a table,” said William So, assistant general manager of the London Restaurant, a long-time destination for traditional dim sum.

“Business will go up, three generations of a family can sit down and eat together,” said So, as carts piled high with steaming bamboo baskets of savory dumplings circulated through the packed dining room. Already, bookings have more than doubled since the relaxed seating policy was announced, he said.

A further round of easing is scheduled to begin May 19, when bars and clubs will be allowed to reopen and restaurants in the southern Chinese city will be permitted to serve customers until midnight.

China has maintained its hard-line “zero-COVID” approach but has imposed less onerous restrictions in Beijing than in other cities such as Shanghai, where millions were placed under strict lockdown.

Beijing will now require arrivals from overseas to quarantine at a hotel for 10 days, followed by another week of home isolation.

Previous rules required 21 days of isolation, at least 14 of them at a hotel, followed by seven days of regular health reporting.

With only a handful of daily international flights into Beijing, the rule change is expected to have little immediate impact on arrivals. Symbolically, however, it appears to show a willingness to compromise with demands for a less intrusive and economically damaging policy.

Still, the capital is taking no chances and on Wednesday closed 60 subway stations, more than 10% of its vast system, to reduce the possibility of the virus spreading.

Restaurants and bars are limited to takeout, gyms are closed and classes are suspended for at least another week. Major tourist sites in the city, including the Forbidden City and the Beijing Zoo, have closed their indoor exhibition halls and are operating at only partial capacity.

Districts have been sorted according to the perceived level of COVID-19 risk in each, and people living in districts in the highest categories are barred from leaving the city. A few communities where cases were discovered have been isolated.

All residents are required to undergo three virus tests during the week as authorities seek to detect and isolate cases without imposing the sort of sweeping lockdowns seen in Shanghai and elsewhere. A negative test result obtained within the previous 48 hours is required to enter most public spaces.

Beijing on Thursday reported just 50 new cases, eight of them asymptomatic.

Shanghai also saw a drop to 4,651 new cases, all but 261 asymptomatic, with an additional 13 deaths. China’s biggest city recorded a daily peak of 27,605 new cases on April 13.

Questions have arisen about the surprisingly low death toll amid an outbreak of more than 400,000 cases in the city that is home to China’s main stock market and biggest port.

HEADLINE	05/05 More apply for jobless aid last week
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/more-americans-apply-for-jobless-aid-last-week/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — More Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week but the total number of people collecting jobless aid is at its lowest level in more than 50 years.</p> <p>Jobless claims in the U.S. rose by 19,000 to 200,000 for the week ending April 30, the Labor Department reported Thursday. First-time applications generally reflect the number of layoffs.</p> <p>The four-week average for claims, which softens some of the weekly volatility, rose 8,000 from the previous week to 188,000.</p> <p>The total number of Americans collecting jobless benefits for the week ending April 23 fell by 19,000 from the previous week, to 1,384,000. That's the fewest since January 17, 1970.</p> <p>American workers are experiencing historically strong job security two years after the coronavirus pandemic plunged the economy into a brief but devastating recession. Weekly applications for unemployment aid have been consistently below the pre-pandemic level of 225,000 for most of this year, even as the overall economy contracted.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that U.S. employers posted a record 11.5 million job openings in March — an unprecedented two job openings for every person who is unemployed. A record 4.5 million Americans quit their jobs in March — a sign that they are confident they can find better pay or improved working conditions elsewhere.</p> <p>Employers have added an average of more than 540,000 jobs a month for the past year, pushing the unemployment rate down to 3.6%. The Labor Department is expected to report Friday that the economy generated another 400,000 new jobs in April, according to a survey by the data firm FactSet. That would mark an unprecedented 12th straight month that hiring has come in at 400,000 or more.</p> <p>The only thing hotter than the job market is inflation. On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve intensified its fight against the worst inflation in 40 years by raising its benchmark short-term interest rate by a half-percentage point — its most aggressive move since 2000 — and signaling further large rate hikes to come.</p> <p>The increase in the Fed's key rate raised it to a range of 0.75% to 1%, the highest point since the pandemic struck two years ago.</p> <p>The Commerce Department reported last month that the U.S. economy shrank last quarter for the first time since the pandemic recession struck two years ago, contracting at a 1.4% annual rate, even as consumers and businesses kept spending in a sign of underlying resilience.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Seattle 'summer of lane closures' to start
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/summer-of-lane-closures-to-begin-this-weekend-on-i-5-in-seattle/
GIST	<p>Drivers on southbound Interstate 5 in Sodo can expect severe congestion this weekend and nearly every Saturday and Sunday through September, as the state finishes a freeway repair project left over from last summer.</p> <p>Contractors for Washington State Department of Transportation will replace 35 of the freeway's legacy steel-plated expansion joints with modern epoxy-tipped joints, and 10 more joints on ramps. Six were replaced last year.</p> <p>"Forget the summer of love, this will be the summer of lane closures," wrote WSDOT spokesperson Amy Moreno in an online update.</p>

WSDOT repaved the 66-year-old freeway's Sodo decks in 2021, but scheduled the joint replacement phase in 2022 — subjecting millions of drivers to a concatenation of ka-thunks, when their tires smack the gaps between the slightly raised viaduct decks.

I-5's southbound mainline will close downtown at 8 p.m. Friday, which means drivers must detour into the collector-distributor lanes on their right. Those who skip the stadium and Interstate 90 exits will wind up rejoining the freeway, but only two lanes will continue through Sodo and past the Columbian Way exit, until the entire roadbed reopens near Boeing Field. All lanes should reopen by 5 a.m. Monday.

There will be no southbound access to I-5's express lanes this weekend, because that would dump traffic into the Sodo work zone. Express lanes will operate northbound at their usual time, 1:45 p.m. to 11 p.m. An earlier opening would alleviate typical mid-day congestion northbound. There's no such plan now, but traffic engineers could consider an early northbound opening for other weekends, if needed, WSDOT spokesperson Tom Pearce said Friday.

Lane closures will complicate travel for Mother's Day and Mariners baseball games this weekend. Transportation officials suggest Sound Transit light rail, express buses, bicycling, carpools, or driving off-hours before 8 a.m. and after 8 p.m.

To avoid the worst traffic jams, drivers could detour to Aurora Avenue north of Mercer Street and enter the Highway 99 tunnel, where weekend tolls are only \$1.15 for Good to Go pass holders, and \$3.15 for others.

This weekend, contractors near Beacon Hill will replace four old I-5 joints next to Beacon Hill, including the steel plate that twisted upward April 1, caused a multicar crash, and snarled traffic most of the day. WSDOT rejiggered its schedule to fix that area first, instead of in August.

The new-generation joints, with synthetic edges and silicone fillings, have withstood traffic punishment without any problems in the northbound lanes, since a resurfacing there in 2007.

Most of this summer's work entails installing the new joint materials between the road decks repaved last year, so the joints level up to the new concrete, and jolts disappear.

C.A. Carey of Issaquah won the two-year, \$27.5 million contract, and chose to divide the paving and joint-filling phases for a more efficient construction sequence, said Pearce. Otherwise, the bid prices would likely have been higher, he said.

The 16 weekend closures will occur through September, weather permitting. WSDOT promised not to reduce lanes during Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day holiday weekends, nor during University of Washington graduation ceremonies June 11-12.

Officials also decided to leave I-5 fully open Juneteenth weekend, June 18-19, Pearce said Friday. This is mainly to avoid aggravating an I-405 closure that weekend in downtown Bellevue, where the East Main Street overpass will be demolished. Future contracts will block out Juneteenth weekend, as holidays from roadwork, he said. Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, when Union soldiers informed Black people in Galveston, Texas they were freed from slavery.

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HEADLINE	05/05 Worrisome: drought expands in Southwest
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/05/us/california-west-drought-update-wildfires-climate/index.html
GIST	(CNN) Drought conditions worsened in much of the Southwest over the past week, according to the latest update from the US Drought Monitor , deepening the region's water crisis and fueling record-setting wildfires across multiple states.

More than 98% of the Southwest is in drought this week, according to the monitor, which noted that reservoir storage levels were below-normal in all Western states except for Washington.

In California, which is entirely in drought conditions, two of the state's largest reservoirs — Shasta Lake and Lake Oroville — are at "critically low levels," according to the monitor.

The state depends on wintertime precipitation to build up snowpack in the Sierr Nevada mountains, which then gradually melts during the spring and replenishes reservoirs. But the water content in the state's snowpack this year [was just 4% of normal](#) by the end of winter.

In Southern California, water district officials [announced water restrictions](#) last week, demanding businesses and residents in parts of Los Angeles, Ventura and San Bernardino counties to cut outdoor watering to one day a week beginning June 1.

"This is a crisis. This is unprecedented," said Adel Hagekhalil, general manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. "We have never done anything like this before and because we haven't seen this situation happen like this before, we don't have enough water to meet normal demands for the six million people living in the State Water Project dependent areas."

The drought-fueled water crisis isn't limited to California. In the Rio Grande Basin, the Elephant Butte Reservoir in New Mexico is roughly 13% full. In the Colorado River Basin, Lake Powell was at 24% of capacity, while Lake Mead was at 31%, according to US Bureau of Reclamation.

On Tuesday, the federal government announced it is taking unprecedented, emergency steps to help boost water levels at Lake Powell, which supplies water to millions of people and generates power for as many as 5.8 million homes and businesses in seven states. Meanwhile, in Lake Mead, the water level is so low that it exposed not only one of the reservoir's original [water intake valves](#) for the first time but also a [body in a barrel](#).

Earlier in March, scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [predicted drought conditions](#) would expand eastward this spring and worsen in some locations — conditions that are now priming much of the Southern landscape for dangerous, fast-moving fires. The agency wrote two months ago that "prolonged, persistent drought in the West where below-average precipitation is most likely," which is what it's shaping up to be this spring.

Drought-fueled wildfires

"In California and the Southwest, conditions were dry during the past week with strong winds observed across the region," according to the US Drought Monitor. "The windy, dry conditions exacerbated fire-weather conditions in Arizona and New Mexico where several large early-season wildfires are currently impacting the region."

New Mexico saw the largest increase in the two worst categories of drought, extreme and exceptional, adding more than 14,000 square miles, which is about double the size of New Jersey, to the worst designations.

The dry conditions primed New Mexico's landscape for the largest fire so far in 2022. The [Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon fires](#) -- which merged this week -- have already burned more than 160,000 acres. That's more land burned so far in 2022 than in the past two full years combined.

The fires prompted the evacuation of thousands of people, with much of the state under a critical fire threat.

"Most of the Southwest is forecast to have above-normal significant fire potential in May and June," the [National Interagency Fire Center](#) reported this week.

	<p>Elsewhere, nearly a quarter of Texas is now in exceptional drought — the most severe category — which is the largest area for the state since 2014. This will likely worsen further over the coming days as Texas is facing an early season heat wave that the state's power provider, ERCOT, warns will bring strain to the regions power grid.</p> <p>The drought summary did point some improvements in drought, including across Oregon, which saw reductions in all four drought designations as a result of recent storms.</p> <p>Scientists say the West's historic, multi-year drought is a clear sign of how the climate crisis is affecting not only the weather, but also communities' water supply, food production, electricity generation and livelihoods.</p> <p>The current conditions is particularly worrisome for many, considering it is only spring season — and summertime heat may worsen conditions. As the planet warms, drought and extreme heat will also fuel deadly wildfires and exacerbate the water crisis.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Moody's: 97% homes in cities overvalued
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/home-prices-mortgage-rates-moodys-mark-zandi/
GIST	<p>Home values in 97% of U.S. cities are overvalued, and real estate in some of the most overpriced regions could fall by 10% over the next few years, according to Moody's Analytics.</p> <p>The pandemic has boosted home prices in parts of the country far beyond the typical coastal hot spots, Moody's chief economist Mark Zandi said in a new analysis. The most overpriced city in the nation is Boise, Idaho, which became a magnet for technology workers who wanted to relocate from pricey California cities when their offices shut due to the pandemic. By Moody's reckoning, Boise's homes are 73% overvalued, making it the most overpriced city in the nation.</p> <p>The analysis may raise concerns for homebuyers, especially in regions where real estate prices have enjoyed rapid gains during the pandemic. At the same time, buyers face a double-whammy of high housing prices and rapidly rising mortgage rates, with the latter adding thousands of dollars to the annual cost of a home.</p> <p>Cities in the South and Mountain West, which have seen an influx of buyers during the pandemic, could suffer a 10% drop in housing prices during the next several years, Zandi predicted.</p> <p>"It probably makes sense to wait a year or two if you are able," he said in an email to CBS MoneyWatch. "House prices will be lower in the most overpriced markets, and there will be more housing inventory to choose from."</p> <p>Zandi added, "Of course, it won't be a slam-dunk better market to purchase a home if you need a mortgage, as mortgage rates will likely be higher."</p> <p>The economist said a given housing market is considered overvalued if property costs in the area are "well above" the historical relationship between home prices and incomes, rents and construction costs.</p> <p>That may explain why smaller cities like Boise are at the top of the list of overvalued home markets, rather than notoriously expensive cities like New York. Housing may be pricier on a per-foot basis in New York or San Francisco, but workers there typically have higher incomes and can support higher costs.</p> <p>Locals in Boise are now competing with buyers from San Francisco and other big cities, who often have more money to spend on housing. That is driving up prices beyond the reach of many people earning a typical salary in those regions.</p>

Nashville, where Moody's estimates homes are 48% overvalued, is one of those cities experiencing the pain of rapid price escalation. Realtor Shane Tallant [told CBS News](#) that new property listings under \$700,000 generate frenzies, with often more than a dozen offers within 24 hours.

Soaring real estate prices in Nashville are forcing out some businesses and consumers. The Little Pantry That Could, which provides food assistance to people in need, was forced to close because its five-year lease wasn't renewed in a neighborhood where investors are buying properties.

"I don't feel like it's my fault, but yeah, of course, it's clear we're letting them down," Stacy Downey, the executive director of the pantry, told CBS News.

"Rock and a hard place"

The nation's most overvalued cities aren't the usual suspects. After Boise, the second-most overpriced market is Sherman-Denison, Texas, near the Dallas-Fort Worth area, where homes are valued 60% above what fundamentals would suggest. Its population has grown by double-digits for two decades as people relocated to Texas from other regions. The third most overpriced city is Muskegon, Michigan, where housing is 59% overvalued, Moody's found.

Homebuyers are "stuck between a rock and a hard place," especially first-time purchasers, noted Jeff Tucker, senior economist at Zillow.

On the one side are surging home prices and mortgage rates, but on the flip side are skyrocketing rents, he pointed out. The monthly rent in the nation's 50 largest cities rose an average of [14% in 2021](#), adding to the financial pressure facing many Americans. That's fueling an interest in buying because purchasers can at least lock in a stable monthly mortgage payment, even if they'll be paying more than a year ago, Tucker noted.

The nation's high housing valuations are raising questions about whether the housing market is facing [another bubble](#), like the one in 2006 that fueled the Great Recession. Yet such concerns are likely misplaced, Tucker said.

"There are a lot of stark differences with the mid-2000s," he said. "For one thing, rents are rising very rapidly, and the credit of all the recent homebuyers is really strong."

That might protect against a repeat of the housing bust, but it may not assuage homebuyers' fears of overpaying.

House-hunters should examine their budgets to figure out if they can afford the purchase, with the guiding principle being to spend no more than one-third of gross income on housing costs, including mortgage, property tax, insurance and maintenance, experts say.

Tucker also recommends asking whether a prospective buyer would be happy to live in the home for several years.

"The classic rule of thumb is five years" to hold onto a property, he said. "If the answers to those questions are yes, then I think there is a good argument for forging ahead to buy that house."

He added, "The other important question is 'Where else would I be living, and how much would that cost?'"

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HEADLINE	05/05 Chechen forces suffer major losses Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/chechen-leader-ramzan-kadyrovs-brutal-fighters-are-getting-killed-in-ukraine-every-day?ref=home

GIST	<p>Chechen troops in Ukraine loyal to Ramzan Kadyrov have claimed a reputation for being the most brutal in Putin's war, but a new report says they're actually suffering major losses and going to great lengths to cover them up.</p> <p>According to an investigation by Russia's independent news outlet IStories, the official figure of 13 Chechen soldiers killed in Ukraine is a major undercount; a source in the Chechen Health Ministry tells the outlet the true death toll of the so-called Kadyrovtsy at least matches that of the Dagestani troops killed in Ukraine, which totals 123.</p> <p>A source involved in sending the bodies of Chechen fighters back home told IStories the Chechen battalions are incurring injuries and deaths every single day.</p> <p>One would never know that from looking at the social media chronicles of Kadyrov, who has sought to cultivate an image of Chechen troops as both fearsome fighters and compassionate rescuers, with images and videos shared to Telegram and the social networking site VK that often seem blatantly staged, showing troops being greeted with open arms by elderly villagers and firing weapons at invisible targets.</p> <p>Kadyrov's troops have also been accused of some of the most heinous war crimes in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with many survivors of the Bucha massacre identifying the soldiers who indiscriminately murdered and tortured civilians as members of Chechen battalions.</p> <p>But the PR campaign by Kadyrov has at times backfired in spectacular fashion, such as when the strongman leader appeared in a video in mid-March purportedly being briefed by his men in a basement in the Kyiv region, only for Ukrainian journalists to use phone data to prove that he was actually in Belarus, followed by even the Kremlin and a source in the Chechen government confirming he was not, in fact, in Kyiv. Or the now notorious photo of Kadyrov supposedly on his knees praying in Ukraine—in front of a gas station owned by a company with no presence in the country.</p> <p>Ukraine's Security Service said at the time that the “clown and coward” Kadyrov was just trying to scare Ukrainian troops by suggesting he had come to join the war.</p> <p>Behind the scenes, Kadyrov's image campaign is said to have masked his own dysfunction, such as when he reportedly threw a hissyfit over Russia's decision to retreat from Kyiv. When Russia's Defense Ministry decided mid-March to pull troops back from the region after an unsuccessful bid to seize the capital, Kadyrov lashed out, fuming that his men were too prestigious to be moved to Mariupol, according to IStories. He is said to have butted heads with both the leadership of Russia's Defense Ministry and the National Guard, getting back at them by ordering his men return to Chechnya to get some “rest,” sources told the news outlet.</p> <p>And in his latest attempt to flaunt Chechen military prowess on social media, Kadyrov proudly declared Thursday that his men had “liberated” the village of Svetlichnoye in the Luhansk region—a village that had already been under the control of Russian proxies in the Luhansk People's Republic since 2014.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Mexico president lashes out on US
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexican-president-slams-us-tour-central-america-84537787
GIST	<p>GUATEMALA CITY -- Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador started a five-day tour to four Central American countries and Cuba on Thursday by lashing out at the U.S. government.</p> <p>López Obrador criticized American officials sharply for being quick to send billions to Ukraine, while dragging their feet on development aid to Central America.</p> <p>On his first stop in neighboring Guatemala, López Obrador demanded U.S. aid to stem the poverty and joblessness that sends tens of thousands of Guatemalans north to the U.S. border. The Mexican leader had</p>

been angered that the United States rebuffed his calls to help expand his tree-planting program to Central America.

“They are different things and they shouldn't be compared categorically, but they have already approved \$30 billion for the war in Ukraine, while we have been waiting since President Donald Trump, asking they donate \$4 billion, and as of today, nothing, absolutely nothing,” López Obrador said.

“Honestly, it seems inexplicable,” he added. “For our part, we are going to continue to respectfully insist on the need for the United States to collaborate.”

López Obrador's pet program, known as “Planting Life,” pays farmers a monthly wage to plant and care for fruit and lumber trees on their farms.

Mexico has asked the U.S. government to help fund the program, something that so far hasn't happened. Mexico is also touting another program that apprentices young people to companies. Critics say both programs lack accountability.

Mexican Foreign Relations Secretary Marcelo Ebrard wrote in his social media accounts that meetings with Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei and other officials focused on development, migration and strengthening bilateral ties.

Ebrard said Mexico was starting the tree program in the Guatemalan province of Chimaltenango.

It is only be the third overseas trip in more than three years for López Obrador, who is fond of saying that the best foreign policy is good domestic policy. The tour is an opportunity for Mexico to reassert itself as a leader in Latin America and will be welcomed by some leaders under pressure from the U.S. government and others for their alleged anti-democratic tendencies.

Both geographically and metaphorically, Mexico finds itself wedged between the United States and the rest of Latin America. López Obrador has deflected criticism dating to the Trump administration that his government is doing Washington's dirty work in trying to stop migrants before they reach the U.S. border.

López Obrador will be received in Central America, in part, as an emissary of the United States when it comes to migration policy.

The U.S. government has been trying to build consensus ahead of the June Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles to cement a regional approach to managing migration flows. In recent years large numbers of Central Americans, but also Haitians, Cubans, Venezuelans, Colombians and migrants arriving from other continents, have made their way up through the Americas.

The visit is an opportunity for López Obrador to show some independence from the United States. López Obrador has criticized the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba and he said that he told U.S. officials that no country should be excluded from the Summit of the Americas. The Biden administration has signaled that Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua would not be invited.

Giammattei, meanwhile, has been under pressure from the U.S. government for backsliding on the country's fight against corruption — a campaign central to López Obrador's image in Mexico.

López Obrador will continue on to El Salvador, where President Nayib Bukele has faced international condemnation since imposing a state of emergency after a surge in gang killings at the end of March.

A visit from López Obrador, who prefers a “hugs not bullets” approach to security, is an opportunity to show he's not being isolated. El Salvador's security forces have arrested more than 24,000 suspected gang members in just over a month and human rights organizations say there have been many arbitrary arrests.

	<p>In Honduras, new President Xiomara Castro has forged a close relationship with the Biden administration. Last month, Honduras extradited former President Juan Orlando Hernández to face drug and weapons charges in the U.S. Castro is desperate to activate the economy and create jobs, so could be open to López Obrador’s proposals if there is money behind it.</p> <p>The president’s agenda in Belize is less clear, but his final stop in Cuba will be the most symbolic. Cuba President Miguel Díaz-Canel visited Mexico for its independence celebrations last year.</p> <p>López Obrador has largely governed as a nationalist and populist, but he has positioned himself politically as a devoted leftist.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Ukraine fighters steel mill refuse surrender
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/defenders-inside-ukrainian-steel-mill-refuse-surrender-84536582
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine -- Ukrainian fighters battling Russian forces in the tunnels beneath Mariupol’s immense steel plant refused to surrender in the face of relentless attacks, with the wife of one commander saying they had vowed to “stand till the end.”</p> <p>The fight in the last Ukrainian stronghold of the strategic port city reduced to ruins by the Russian onslaught appeared increasingly desperate amid growing speculation that President Vladimir Putin wants to present the Russian people with a battlefield triumph — or announce an escalation of the war — in time for Victory Day on Monday.</p> <p>“They won’t surrender,” Kateryna Prokopenko said Thursday after speaking by phone to her husband, a leader of the steel plant defenders. “They only hope for a miracle.”</p> <p>She said her husband, Azov Regiment commander Denys Prokopenko, told her he would love her forever. “I am going mad from this. It seemed like words of goodbye,” she said.</p> <p>The Ukrainian military’s General Staff said Friday that “the blockade of units of the defense forces in the Azovstal area continues” and that the Russians, with aviation support, had resumed assault operations to take control of the sprawling plant.</p> <p>Monday’s Victory Day is the biggest patriotic holiday on the Russian calendar, marking the Soviet Union’s triumph over Nazi Germany. But as long as Ukrainians resist the takeover of the plant, “Russian losses will continue to build and frustrate their operational plans in southern Donbas,” the British Defense Ministry said in an assessment.</p> <p>Some 2,000 Ukrainian fighters, by Russia’s most recent estimate, were holed up in a maze of tunnels and bunkers beneath Azovstal steelworks. A few hundred civilians were also believed trapped there.</p> <p>“There are many wounded (fighters), but they are not surrendering,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address. “They are holding their positions.”</p> <p>“Just imagine this hell! And there are children there,” he said. “More than two months of constant shelling, bombing, constant death.”</p> <p>The Russians managed to get inside the plant Wednesday with the help of an electrician who knew the layout, said Anton Gerashchenko, an adviser to Ukraine’s Internal Affairs Ministry.</p> <p>“He showed them the underground tunnels which are leading to the factory,” Gerashchenko said in a video.</p>

Zelenskyy said the attack was preventing evacuation of the remaining civilians, even as U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said another attempt was underway. "We must continue to do all we can to get people out of these hellscapes," Guterres said.

The Kremlin denied its troops were storming the plant and has demanded the Ukrainians surrender. They have refused. Russia has also accused the fighters of preventing the civilians from leaving.

The fall of Mariupol would deprive Ukraine of a vital port, allow Russia to establish a land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014, and free up troops to fight elsewhere in the Donbas, the eastern industrial region that the Kremlin says is now its chief objective.

Capt. Sviatoslav Palamar, deputy commander of the Azov Regiment, pleaded on Ukrainian TV for the evacuation of civilians and wounded fighters from the steelworks, saying soldiers were "dying in agony due to the lack of proper treatment."

More than 100 civilians were rescued from the steelworks over the weekend. But many previous attempts to open safe corridors from Mariupol have fallen through, with Ukraine blaming shelling and firing by the Russians.

Meanwhile, 10 weeks into the devastating war, Ukraine's military claimed it recaptured some areas in the south and repelled other attacks in the east, further frustrating Putin's ambitions after his abortive attempt to seize Kyiv. Ukrainian and Russian forces are fighting village by village.

The General Staff in Kyiv said Russian forces were conducting surveillance flights, and in the hard-hit areas of Donetsk and Luhansk, Ukrainian forces repulsed 11 attacks and destroyed tanks and armored vehicles. Russia gave no immediate acknowledgement of those losses.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Russian forces are making only "plodding" progress in the Donbas.

There are growing suggestions that Ukraine might try to widen its push to seize more territory from Russia outside of Kharkiv, its second-largest city.

Ukrainian chief of defense, Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, said Thursday that a counteroffensive could begin to push Russian forces away from Kharkiv and Izyum, which has been a key node in Russia's control of the eastern cauldron. Ukraine in recent days has driven Russian troops some 40 kilometers (25 miles) east of Kharkiv, which has been repeatedly struck by Russian shelling.

Additional Ukrainian advances may spare the city from artillery strikes, as well as force Moscow to divert troops from other areas of the front line.

On Thursday, an American official said the U.S. shared intelligence with Ukraine about the location of a Russian flagship before the mid-April strike that sank it, one of Moscow's highest-profile failures in the war.

The U.S. has provided "a range of intelligence" that includes locations of warships, said the official, who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. The official said the decision to target the missile cruiser Moskva was purely a Ukrainian decision.

Fearful of new attacks surrounding Victory Day, the mayor of the western Ukrainian city of Ivano-Frankivsk urged residents to leave for the countryside over the long weekend and warned them not to gather in public places.

And the southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia, a key transit point for evacuees from Mariupol, announced a curfew from Sunday evening through Tuesday morning.

Mariupol, which had a prewar population of over 400,000, has come to symbolize the misery inflicted by the war. The siege of the city has trapped perhaps 100,000 civilians with little food, water, medicine or heat.

As the battle raged there, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Russian bombardment Thursday hit dozens of Ukrainian military targets, including troop concentrations in the east, an artillery battery near the eastern settlement of Zarozhne and rocket launchers near the southern city of Mykolaiv.

The war has devastated Ukraine's medical infrastructure, Zelenskyy said in a video link to a charity event in the U.K. Nearly 400 health care facilities have been damaged or destroyed, he said.

"There is simply a catastrophic situation regarding access to medical services and medicines," in areas occupied by Russian forces, he said. "Even the simplest drugs are lacking."

With the challenge of mine-clearing and rebuilding after the war in mind, Zelenskyy announced the launch of a global fundraising platform called United24.

At the same time, Poland hosted an international donor conference that raised \$6.5 billion in humanitarian aid. The gathering was attended by prime ministers and ambassadors from many European countries, as well as representatives of other nations and some businesses.

In addition, a Ukrainian cabinet body began to develop proposals for a comprehensive postwar reconstruction plan, while Zelenskyy also urged Western allies to put forward a program similar to the post-World War II Marshall Plan plan to help Ukraine rebuild.

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HEADLINE	05/05 Germany ends EU training mission Mali
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-ready-continue-un-mission-mali-defmin-2022-05-04/?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=4212689
GIST	<p>MESEBERG, Germany, May 4 (Reuters) - Germany will end its participation in the European Union training mission in Mali but is ready to continue with a U.N. peacekeeping mission in the country under certain conditions, Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht said on Wednesday.</p> <p>France and allies fighting Islamist militants in Mali earlier this year said they would pull out troops after almost a decade. read more</p> <p>The exit raised questions about the futures of the 14,000-strong United Nations peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA) and the European Union's EUTM and EUCAP missions.</p> <p>Under the current transitional Malian government, there was a danger that Germany-trained Malian soldiers could fight together with Russian troops and "commit cruel violations of human rights", Lambrecht said after a cabinet meeting in Meseberg, a city north of Berlin.</p> <p>"We cannot support such a system any longer," the defence minister said. "That's why we will stop our (participation in the) EUTM training mission."</p> <p>The decision comes a month after Human Rights Watch (HRW) accused Malian troops and suspected Russian fighters of executing around 300 civilian men in a central Mali town, and more than two months into Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The West African country's army denied the HRW allegations. Mali and Russia have previously said the Russians in the country are trainers helping local troops with equipment bought from Russia.</p>

	<p>Germany was willing to continue its participation in the MINUSMA peacekeeping mission if the U.N. made sure that shortfalls created by the French withdrawal were filled to ensure the safety of German soldiers, Lambrecht said.</p> <p>"I expect the U.N. to create conditions for us to continue our involvement in MINUSMA. We are ready to continue the mandate," Lambrecht said.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	05/05 State Bar of Georgia suffers cyberattack
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/state-bar-of-georgia-cyberattack/
GIST	<p>Officials with the State Bar of Georgia have spent much of the week responding to a cyberattack that crippled the organization's network, website and email system.</p> <p>The State Bar is not part of the state government, but the Supreme Court of Georgia authorizes it to hold ethics investigations into the state's lawyers and sanction those who violate state rules. The organization also provides guidance and assistance to lawyers in the state as well as a directory of attorneys.</p> <p>As of Thursday afternoon, Eastern time, the State Bar's website still carried only a single page of information for members about the attack.</p> <p>Officials said the incident began Monday, and they soon hired an unnamed cybersecurity firm to investigate. The organization also said it had deployed an endpoint detection and response system throughout the network.</p> <p>Jennifer Mason, director of communications at the State Bar, told The Record that officials are unsure whether member data was stolen in the attack.</p> <p>"Upon learning of the unauthorized access, we immediately took steps to secure the network, a cybersecurity firm was engaged and a thorough investigation is being conducted," Mason said.</p> <p>Mason did not respond to questions about whether it was a ransomware attack.</p> <p>"We are still investigating the incident and have not determined what information, if any, the unauthorized actor may have accessed," Mason said. "Updates will be posted on www.gabar.org as additional information is available."</p> <p>The website now provides a list of phone numbers people can call in order to access services.</p> <p>This is far from Georgia's first run-in with cybersecurity issues. In 2019, the state's court system was hit with a ransomware incident following an even larger ransomware attack that crippled the Atlanta city government. Officials in Jackson County were forced to pay \$400,000 to get rid of a ransomware infection and regain access to IT systems in March 2019.</p> <p>A Savannah, Georgia-based health system suffered a ransomware incident last year, and the local government of Hall County was attacked by a ransomware group right before the 2020 election.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 VHD ransomware linked to NKorea APT
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/vhd-ransomware-lazarus-group/179507/
GIST	Source code and Bitcoin transactions point to the malware, which emerged in March 2020, being the work of APT38, researchers at Trellix said.

Cryptocurrency thief Lazarus Group appears to be widening its scope into using ransomware as a way to rip off financial institutions and other targets in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region, researchers have found.

Financial transactions and similarities to previous malware in its source code link a recently emerged ransomware strain called VHD to the North Korean threat actors, also known as Unit 180 or APT35.

Researchers at [cybersecurity firm Trellix](#) has been tracking attacks on financial institutions from what they believe is North Korea's cyber army—which typically generate from Lazarus Group—for the last few years. The group is perhaps best known for its deftness at ripping off the crypto-currency market through [money-laundering schemes to raise money](#) for the North Korean government. However, Lazarus also appears to have been playing the ransomware game for at least a year, Trellix revealed in [a blog post](#) this week. Researchers found that Bitcoin transactions and connections to code from ransomware previously used by the group make it likely that VHD, which emerged in March 2020, is the work of APT38, they said.

Financial Attacks Raise Suspicion

A significant precursor to linking Lazarus to VHD was an attempt by threat actors in February 2016 to transfer nearly US\$1 billion through the SWIFT system towards recipients at other banks, according to the post by Trellix researcher Christian Beek.

“The investigation, performed by several U.S. agencies, led to a North Korean actor, dubbed ‘[Hidden Cobra](#),’” he wrote. “Ever since then, the group has been active, compromising numerous victims.”

Hidden Cobra, active since 2014, is believed to be the work of Lazarus Group. In 2017, the [FBI warned](#) that the group was targeting U.S. businesses with malware- and botnet-related attacks.

“Over time we have observed several methods North Korea has used to gain money,” Beek wrote “Although not as frequently observed as other groups, there have also been attempts made to step into the world of ransomware.”

Trellix has followed North Korean-linked actors' attacks on financial institutions—such as global banks, blockchain providers and users from South Korea—over the last few years. Tactics used included spear-phishing emails as well as the use of fake mobile applications and companies, researchers noted.

“Since these attacks were predominantly observed targeting the APAC region with targets in Japan and Malaysia for example, we anticipate these attacks might have been executed to discover if ransomware is a valuable way of gaining income,” Beek wrote.

Code Links

Knowing that ransomware has emerged a part of the toolkit of the North Korean cyber army, Trellix researchers peered under the hood of the VHD code to find similarities that they believed pointed to reuse from previous ransomware, Beek wrote.

“Using those [code] blocks as a starting point, a hunt was started from March 2020 onwards to discover related families,” he wrote.

Researchers identified code from four ransomware families known to be used by North Korean threat actors—BGEAF, PXJ, ZZZZ and CHiCHi—in the code of VHD.

While the Tflower and ChiChi families share only generic-function code with VHD, “the ZZZZ ransomware is almost an exact clone of the Beaf ransomware family,” which has been linked to North Korea, Beek wrote.

“Another observation is that the four letters of the ransomware ‘BEAF’ ... are exactly the same first four bytes of the handshake of APT38's tool known as Beefeater,” he added.

The use of the MATA framework in VHD—which has been used to spread the Tflower ransomware family—also links the VHD to Lazarus, as MATA has previously been linked to North Korea, researchers said.

Following the Money

Researchers then investigated the various ransomware families they'd linked to North Korea, which all seemed to target specific entities in APAC regions, to try to find financial overlap between them.

They extracted the Bitcoin wallet addresses and started tracing and monitoring the transactions, though they did not find overlap in the wallets themselves, Beek wrote.

“We did find, however, that the paid ransom amounts were relatively small,” he wrote, linking a pattern between the ransomware families attributed to North Korean actors.

For example, a transaction of 2.2 Bitcoin in mid-2020 was worth around \$US20,00 and was transferred multiple times through December 2020, researchers found. At that time, a transaction took place on a Bitcoin exchange to either cash out—as the value had roughly doubled—or exchange for a different and less traceable cryptocurrency, they said.

“We suspect the ransomware families ... are part of more organized attacks,” Beek wrote. “Based on our research, combined intelligence, and observations of the smaller targeted ransomware attacks, Trellix attributes them to [North Korean] hackers with high confidence.”

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HEADLINE	05/06 New espionage attacks by 'Mustang Panda'
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/05/experts-uncover-new-espionage-attacks.html
GIST	<p>The China-based threat actor known as Mustang Panda has been observed refining and retooling its tactics and malware to strike entities located in Asia, the European Union, Russia, and the U.S.</p> <p>"Mustang Panda is a highly motivated APT group relying primarily on the use of topical lures and social engineering to trick victims into infecting themselves," Cisco Talos said in a new report detailing the group's evolving modus operandi.</p> <p>The group is known to have targeted a wide range of organizations since at least 2012, with the actor primarily relying on email-based social engineering to gain initial access to drop PlugX, a backdoor predominantly deployed for long-term access.</p> <p>Phishing messages attributed to the campaign contain malicious lures masquerading as official European Union reports on the ongoing conflict in Ukraine or Ukrainian government reports, both of which download malware onto compromised machines.</p> <p>Also observed are phishing messages tailored to target various entities in the U.S. and several Asian countries like Myanmar, Hong Kong, Japan, and Taiwan.</p> <p>The findings follow a recent report from Secureworks that the group may have been targeting Russian government officials using a decoy containing PlugX that disguised itself as a report on the border detachment to Blagoveshchensk.</p> <p>But similar attacks detected towards the end of March 2022 show that the actors are updating their tactics by reducing the remote URLs used to obtain different components of the infection chain.</p> <p>Other than PlugX, infection chains utilized by the APT group have involved the deployment of custom stagers, reverse shells, Meterpreter-based shellcode, and Cobalt Strike, all of which are used to establish remote access to their targets with the intention of conducting espionage and information theft.</p>

	"By using summit- and conference-themed lures in Asia and Europe, this attacker aims to gain as much long-term access as possible to conduct espionage and information theft," Talos researchers said.
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HEADLINE	05/05 Security memo: quantum computing risks
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/us-gov-issues-security-memo-quantum-computing-risks
GIST	<p>The U.S. government is barreling ahead with plans to mitigate future threats from quantum computing with a new White House memo directing federal agencies to jumpstart an all-hands-on-deck approach to migrating to quantum-resistant technologies.</p> <p>The security memo, released alongside a plan to promote U.S. leadership in quantum computing, directs specific actions for agencies to take during what is being described as a laborious, multi-year process of migrating vulnerable computer systems to quantum-resistant cryptography.</p> <p>"Research shows that at some point in the not-too-distant future, when quantum computers reach a sufficient size and level of sophistication, they will be capable of breaking much of the cryptography that currently secures our digital communications on the Internet," the government warned.</p> <p>Noting that quantum computing poses "significant risks to the economic and national security of the United States," the White House cautioned that a quantum computer of sufficient size and sophistication "will be capable of breaking much of the public-key cryptography used on digital systems across the United States and around the world."</p> <p>"When it becomes available, [this] could jeopardize civilian and military communications, undermine supervisory and control systems for critical infrastructure, and defeat security protocols for most Internet-based financial transactions," the White House noted.</p> <p>To kick start the process, the government said the National Security Agency (NSA) and National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will develop and publish new quantum-resistant cryptographic standards that can protect against these future attacks.</p> <p>The first sets of these standards are expected to be released publicly by 2024.</p> <p>Once these are in place, the White House said a "whole-of-government and whole-of-society strategy" would be necessary to mitigate as much of the quantum risk as is feasible by 2035.</p> <p>"Central to this migration effort will be an emphasis on cryptographic agility, both to reduce the time required to transition and to allow for seamless updates for future cryptographic standards. This effort is imperative across all sectors of the United States economy, from government to critical infrastructure, commercial services to cloud providers, and everywhere else that vulnerable public-key cryptography is used," the government said.</p> <p>The memo outlines deadlines and plans for multi-agency coordination of a quantum migration plan and comes as open-source tools are now being fitted with new features to prevent "capture now, decrypt later" attacks linked to advancements in quantum computing.</p> <p>According to notes published alongside the release of OpenSSH 9.0, the open-source group is now using the hybrid Streamlined NTRU Prime + x25519 key exchange method by default, a move that includes a backstop against future discoveries of flaws in the NTRU algorithm.</p> <p>"The NTRU algorithm is believed to resist attacks enabled by future quantum computers and is paired with the X25519 ECDH key exchange (the previous default) as a backstop against any weaknesses in NTRU Prime that may be discovered in the future. The combination ensures that the hybrid exchange offers at least as good security as the status quo," OpenSSH explained.</p>

	"We are making this change now (i.e. ahead of cryptographically-relevant quantum computers) to prevent "capture now, decrypt later" attacks where an adversary who can record and store SSH session ciphertext would be able to decrypt it once a sufficiently advanced quantum computer is available," it added.
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HEADLINE	05/05 Spain spy chief admits legal hacking
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/catalan-spain-spy-chief-admits-legally-hacking-some-phones
GIST	<p>A leading Catalan separatist politician said Thursday that Spain's top intelligence official acknowledged that her agency had hacked into the cellphones of "some" of the dozens of politicians reported to be targeted by spyware but she said it had proper judicial authorization.</p> <p>Gabriel Rufián, member of a Catalan pro-independence party, spoke after he participated in a closed-door meeting with the director of Spain's National Intelligence Center, CNI, along with a select group of Spanish lawmakers.</p> <p>A recent report by the Canadian-based digital rights group Citizen Lab on the use of the controversial Pegasus spyware in Spain said dozens of pro-independence supporters in Spain's northeastern Catalonia region were spied upon using the software.</p> <p>When asked by The Associated Press, Spain's Defense Ministry, which is in charge of the CNI, refused to comment on the meeting with CNI director Paz Esteban because its contents are considered classified. Leading Spanish media, however, also reported that the director had shown committee members court authorizations for hacking the cellphones of some Catalan separatists.</p> <p>"They (the CNI) admit to the spying, but say that it was carried out against far fewer people than those cited by Citizen Lab," Rufián said.</p> <p>As for the rest of the over 60 politicians, lawyers and activists cited as hacking targets by Citizen Lab, Rufián said the CNI director "point(ed) to two possibilities: One, that it was a foreign country; or two, state agencies that are spying beyond their legal limits."</p> <p>The highly anticipated meeting took place at Spain's Parliament building in Madrid.</p> <p>The Catalan separatists, who want to carve out a new state in northeastern Spain around Barcelona, had directly accused the CNI of being behind the hacks that came to light two weeks ago when the Citizen Lab report was released.</p> <p>Spain's government has repeatedly said the CNI cannot tap phones without prior judicial authorization. At the same time, the government said the secrecy law shielding all CNI activities prevents the agency from confirming whether it possesses Pegasus, the spyware sold by Israeli company NSO Group.</p> <p>While representatives from Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's Socialist party and the opposition Popular Party emerged from Thursday's meeting saying they were satisfied by Esteban's explanations, Rufián was not alone in demanding further action.</p> <p>"We insist that the information that we received today be declassified for the public to know, since it affects fundamental rights," said Albert Botran, who is among the politicians that Citizen Lab said was spied upon.</p> <p>The Spanish government has promised that both CNI and the nation's ombudsman will investigate the Citizen Lab report.</p> <p>Amnesty International, which has denounced the use of the Pegasus spyware in several countries, on Thursday demanded more transparency from Spain.</p>

“This committee, characterized for its secrecy and obscurantism, cannot be considered the appropriate venue to investigate the alleged violence of human rights,” said Esteban Beltrán, Amnesty’s director in Spain.

In addition to the Catalan hacking case, Spain’s intelligence agency is facing an uncomfortable spotlight due to another case of Pegasus hacking. Earlier this week, Spain announced that the cellphones of both Sánchez, the prime minister, and Defense Minister Margarita Robles were infected last year with Pegasus spyware.

Although Spain has refused to point a finger at Morocco, the dates the phones of Sánchez and Robles were hacked last year match up with a diplomatic crisis between the two countries.

Amid the back-to-back scandals, plans for a public ceremony to observe CNI’s 20th anniversary were postponed.

Robles has encouraged the Catalans to take their hacking case to court, just like the Spanish government has, to determine who is responsible.

“Only the judiciary can determine who is responsible,” Robles said Thursday. “We can only take our cases to court, and in the meantime refrain from accusations.”

Robles has appeared to justify the crackdown on the Catalan separatists for their role in Catalonia’s illegal secession bid in 2017 and the mostly peaceful pro-secession street protests organized via a secretive social media platform. The events sometimes spiraled out of control and led to clashes with police, the blocking of roads and train lines, and the closure of Barcelona’s airport in 2019.

The CNI, which oversees Spain’s cybersecurity, only discovered that Sánchez’s and Robles’ phones had been hacked after the devices underwent deep scans following the revelations of the breaches into the phones of the Catalans. Previous checks found no evidence of the hacks in May and June 2021, the government has been forced to admit.

The hacking scandals, coming in quick succession, have left many Spaniards wondering how widespread the spying is, and which actor, or actors, are behind it. Some Catalan separatists accuse Spain of using the revelation of the hacking of top officials to detract attention from their cases.

“Being a victim does not preclude you from being a perpetrator when it comes to Pegasus,” John-Scott Railton, senior researcher at Citizen Lab, told The AP on Thursday. “NSO’s objective is to proliferate this spyware, not to protect the security of countries.”

“This will not be solved quietly. This will not be solved with partial truths,” Railton said. “There has been some partial confirmation here, and the only road forward here is more transparency.”

The European Parliament opened an investigation into Pegasus’ use in the European Union, initially intended to focus on Hungary and Poland. The list of Catalans allegedly hacked also includes European Parliament members.

Digital break-ins of phones with Pegasus have been reported and denounced in several countries. French President Emmanuel Macron was included on a list of heads of state that Amnesty International suspected were targeted last year.

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HEADLINE	05/05 Illuminate breach impacts more schools
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/illuminate-breach-impacts-school/

GIST	<p>A cyber-attack that compromised the personal data of hundreds of thousands of students in New York has affected additional students based in Colorado.</p> <p>The security incident occurred at California-based software company and New York City vendor Illuminate Education, which makes apps to track student grades and attendance.</p> <p>Cyber-criminals hacked into the company's network, gaining access to databases containing student data, some of which they exfiltrated.</p> <p>In March, New York City's Department of Education announced that the attack had exposed the names, birthdates, ethnicities, home languages and student ID numbers of 820,000 current and former New York City public school students.</p> <p>According to recent reports by 9News and KOAA, the intrusion at Illuminate has also impacted school districts in Colorado, including Douglas County, Mesa County Valley School District 51, District 12 and District 70.</p> <p>On Tuesday, parents of District 70 students received a letter advising them that their children's data may have been compromised.</p> <p>"On January 8 2022, Illuminate Education became aware of suspicious activity in a set of isolated applications within their programs. They immediately took steps to secure the affected applications and launched an investigation with external forensic specialists to determine the nature and scope of the activity," states the letter.</p> <p>The investigation determined on March 24 that unauthorized access to "certain databases, containing potentially protected student information" had taken place between December 28 2021 and January 8 2022.</p> <p>District 70 parents were told that while no child's Social Security number was impacted by the breach, other data, including name, birth date, school of enrollment, student ID and gender had been compromised.</p> <p>A similar letter was sent to the parents of District 12 students on April 29. Both District 12 and 70 have withdrawn all their students' data from Illuminate Education and have stated that they will not engage the services of the company in the future.</p> <p>Mesa County Valley School District 51, which used Illuminate Education's assessment, progress monitoring and screening tool, Educlimber, said the databases accessed in the breach may have contained students' academic and behavior information and accommodation information.</p> <p>Illuminate is offering impacted individuals 12 months of complimentary identity monitoring services.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Disruption to Russia alcohol distribution
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ukraine-s-it-army-is-disrupting-russias-alcohol-distribution/
GIST	<p>Hackers operating on the side of Ukraine have focused their DDoS attacks on a portal that is considered crucial for the distribution of alcoholic beverages in Russia.</p> <p>DDoS (distributed denial of service) attacks are collective efforts to overwhelm servers with large volumes of garbage traffic and bogus requests, rendering them unable to serve legitimate visitors.</p> <p>According to reports from multiple Russian media outlets, several vodka producers and distributors claim inability to access the EGAIS (ЕГАИС) portal as required by government regulations.</p>

As a result, alcohol beverages transportation and distribution to retail points have suffered greatly in the past couple of days, raising the risk of actual shortages on the shelves.

A person working in the field [told Vedomosti](#) that “Due to a large-scale failure, factories cannot accept tanks with alcohol, and customers, stores, and distributors, can not receive finished products that have already been delivered to them.”

Yesterday, many factories decided to halt shipments to warehouses completely and subsequently cut their production rate, as they are overflowing with products that remain undelivered and can't take any more.

Ukraine's IT Army lists EGAIS

At the time of writing this, the portal of EGAIS [remains out of reach](#), so we can only assume that the DDoS attack is still ongoing.

Bleeping Computer has found the associated websites listed as targets on Ukraine's IT Army Telegram channel, so there's a good chance that they are behind these attacks.

The posts on Telegram are meant to help coordinate DDoS activities that are launched independently from isolated actors using tools like the [Liberator](#).

EGAIS sites listed on IT Army channel

Ukraine's IT Army is a special type of a cyber-force that enlists volunteers from around the globe, uniting them under the common goal of launching retaliatory cyberattacks against key Russian entities.

The formation of this otherwise illegal task force was announced by Ukraine's government officials [in February 2022](#) and has remained active on the cyber front line since then.

Attacks on Russian supply chains

This is not the first attack targeting Russia's internal product supply chains, aiming to cause disruption and potentially even shortages.

Last March, the Moscow-based meat producer, and distributor Miratorg announced news of a cyberattack that encrypted its IT systems, aiming to [sabotage its operations](#).

The point of compromise was another state information system, VetIS, used by companies engaged in the veterinary field.

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HEADLINE	05/05 New Raspberry Robin worm drops malware
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-raspberry-robin-worm-uses-windows-installer-to-drop-malware/
GIST	<p>Red Canary intelligence analysts have discovered a new Windows malware with worm capabilities that spreads using external USB drives.</p> <p>This malware is linked to a cluster of malicious activity dubbed Raspberry Robin and was first observed in September 2021.</p> <p>Red Canary's Detection Engineering team detected the worm in multiple customers' networks, some in the technology and manufacturing sectors.</p> <p>Raspberry Robin spreads to new Windows systems when an infected USB drive containing a malicious .LNK file is connected.</p>

Once attached, the worm spawns a new process using cmd.exe to launch a malicious file stored on the infected drive.

Windows legitimate tools abused to install malware

It uses [Microsoft Standard Installer](#) (msiexec.exe) to reach out to its command-and-control (C2) servers, likely hosted on compromised QNAP devices and using TOR exit nodes as additional C2 infrastructure. "While msiexec.exe downloads and executes legitimate installer packages, adversaries also leverage it to deliver malware," the researchers [said](#).

"Raspberry Robin uses msiexec.exe to attempt external network communication to a malicious domain for C2 purposes."

While they haven't yet found if it establishes persistence and through which methods, they suspect that the malware installs a malicious DLL file [\[1, 2\]](#) on compromised machines to resist removal between restarts.

Raspberry Robin launches this DLL with the help of two other legitimate Windows utilities: fodhelper (a trusted binary for managing features in Windows settings) and odbconf (a tool for configuring ODBC drivers).

The first allows it to bypass User Account Control (UAC), while the second will help execute and configure the DLL.

How and why?

While the Red Canary analysts have been able to closely inspect what the newly discovered does on infected systems, there are still several questions that need to be answered.

"First and foremost, we don't know how or where Raspberry Robin infects external drives to perpetuate its activity, though it's likely this occurs offline or otherwise outside of our visibility. We also don't know why Raspberry Robin installs a malicious DLL," the researchers said.

"One hypothesis is that it may be an attempt to establish persistence on an infected system, though additional information is required to build confidence in that hypothesis."

Since there is no info on this malware's end-stage malicious tasks, another question that needs an answer is what is the Raspberry Robin operators' goal.

Further technical information on the Raspberry Robin worm, including indicators of compromise (IOCs) and an ATT&CK of this malware, can be found in [Red Canary's report](#).

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HEADLINE	05/06 Google Docs crashes on word series
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/technology/google-docs-crashes-on-seeing-and-and-and-and-and/
GIST	<p>A bug in Google Docs is causing it to crash when a series of words are typed into a document opened with the online word processor.</p> <p>Once crashed, you may not be able to easily re-access the document as doing so would trigger the crash again.</p> <p>BleepingComputer was able to reproduce the issue last night and reached out to Google.</p> <p>Google told us it is aware of the bug and working on a fix. Until then, we share a workaround below.</p> <p>And. And. And. And... it's gone!</p> <p><i>It's official</i>—Google Docs crashes at the sight of "And. And. And. And. And." when the "Show grammar suggestion" is turned on.</p>

A Google Docs user, Pat Needham brought up the issue on Google Docs Editors Help forum.

"I've only tried in Google Chrome, with documents from three separate Google accounts (personal, G Suite Basic, and work one which might be enterprise). All three experience this same issue," [wrote](#) the user.

"It's case-sensitive. So trying with 'and. and. And. and. And.' doesn't cause it to crash."

While Needham publicly reported the bug, it appears that the issue was discovered by Eliza Callahan who was writing a [poem](#) novel for her novel using Google Docs.

In tests by BleepingComputer last night, the behavior could be reproduced successfully on the latest version of Chrome web browser running on macOS Monterey.

After creating a new Google Docs document, as soon as we typed the offending string into the document and refreshed the page, we started getting the following error messages and were unable to further review or edit the document...

Needham's findings have also been [confirmed](#) by other users running Firefox 99.0.1

Another user, Sergii Dymchenko, said strings like "But. But. But. But. But." triggered the same response. Some also [noticed](#) putting any of the terms like "Also, Therefore, And, Anyway, But, Who, Why, Besides, However," in the same format achieved the outcome.

A YCombinator HackerNews reader [suspected](#) the cause to be the "Show grammar suggestion" option in Google Docs, which in our test was turned on by default.

A Google spokesperson confirmed the presence of the issue to BleepingComputer adding, "we're aware of this issue and the team is working on a fix."

How to recover your document?

Until Google has an answer as to what causes this problem, it might be wise to turn off grammar suggestions by navigating to *Tools→Spelling and grammar* and unticking '*Show grammar suggestions.*'

If the bug has already been triggered and you're locked out of the Google Doc in question, there might be a workaround.

Use the Google Docs mobile app to access the document, remove the offending words and the file should now open up gracefully on your Google Docs web version too.

"It doesn't crash documents on mobile, for some reason, so if you've lost one of your documents to this you can get the Docs app on your phone, delete the offending sentence, and reload," [suggests](#) user Sauron Gorthaur.

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HEADLINE	05/05 Cybercriminals compromise honeypots
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/application-security/docker-becomes-target-tool-for-attackers
GIST	<p>Cybercriminals are ramping up their attacks on the Docker Engine — the software foundation of the container infrastructure used by many cloud-native companies. Researchers flagged a pair of cyber campaigns this week that showcase the increasing risk, including a compromise aimed at launching denial-of-service (DoS)) attacks on Russian targets.</p> <p>On May 5, researchers at cloud-management platform Uptycs said that attackers compromised the firm's honeypot, a Docker server configured to allow connections through the remote Docker API. The attacks</p>

resulted in the cybercriminals installing cryptomining software and creating a reverse shell, which would have allowed them to explore the server in real time.

The company has detected 10 to 20 attempts to compromise the honeypot server every day, suggesting that attackers have increased their interest in Docker-based infrastructure, says Amit Malik, director of threat research at Uptycs.

"We configured one of our machines as a honeypot, and within three hours, we saw it compromised, so we had to shut it down and rebuild it," Malik says. "The infection point is very rapid."

The attacks on [Uptycs' Docker-based infrastructure are not unique](#). The incidents are happening to other companies as well.

Unwitting Hosts to Hostile DoS Activity Against Russia

Honeypots maintained by cybersecurity services firm CrowdStrike experienced similar attacks through the Docker remote API, generally assigned to port 2375 or 2376, according to [an analysis of an attack posted on May 4](#).

CrowdStrike researchers revealed that attackers compromised its honeypots through the open Docker API and then installed two malicious container images that were used to attack Russian and Belarusian sites.

The target lists include the websites of the Russian and Belarusian governments, military, media, and retail sectors, as well as Russian mining, manufacturing, chemical, and technology sectors, according to CrowdStrike.

Both DoS-enabling containers are hosted on Docker Hub. One of the images has been downloaded more than 100,000 times; the second has been downloaded 50,000. CrowdStrike researchers noted that the portion of these downloads that originated from compromised machines is unknown.

The use of compromised infrastructure has far-reaching consequences for organizations that may unwittingly be participating in hostile activity against Russian government, military, and civilian targets, the firm warned. Any investigation into the attack by Russian intelligence will likely point back to the victim's server, says Adam Meyers, vice president of intelligence at CrowdStrike.

"It is a little different when they are using your infrastructure to attack a third party," he says. "If [Russia or Belarus] starts looking at these attacks, they might say, 'Oh, they are DoSing us, so we will DoS them.'"

Security Needs to Focus on Docker Threats

While Docker is well known in the development and DevOps communities, security professionals may not be as aware of the potential for insecure configurations or vulnerabilities to undermine enterprise security, Meyers says.

The attack surface is concerning: In December, security startup Prevasio found that [51% of the 4 million images they scanned on Docker Hub](#) included packages that had a critical security vulnerability. On the misconfiguration front, while exposing the remote Docker API is not a common configuration — currently Shodan counts 803 assets exposing port 2375 — the relatively frequent scanning of the port means that any misconfiguration would be exploited quickly.

"It is a relatively new technology, and with any new technology there is a security curve that goes with that," Meyers says. "There is a general lack of awareness around the threat, and that is the thing that we are trying to raise the flag with here. You need to take Docker security seriously."

More Visibility Needed into Docker

To understand their level of risk, businesses should ensure that they can adequately monitor the attack surface area of assets such as Docker, Kubernetes servers, and DevOps-related infrastructure, says Siddharth Sharma, a researcher at Uptycs.

"Most of these attacks go unnoticed because people might not have a comprehensive security solution monitoring their Docker infrastructure," he says. "So the attacker will not be detected as often, unless something goes wrong. But often the types of [payloads] they install are not obvious."

Last year, Docker changed the licensing terms of Docker Desktop, moving to a subscription model and arguing that the shift will [help the company support more security features and audits](#). The move came two years after the company split, dividing into Docker — focused on development with Docker Hub and Docker Desktop — and the enterprise infrastructure components of Docker Enterprise, which was sold to Mirantis.

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HEADLINE	05/05 SideWinder APT: 1,000+ attacks in 2yrs
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/1000-attacks-sidewinder-apt-sheds-skin
GIST	<p>It's one of the more prolific yet lesser-known nation-state hacking groups in the world, and it's not out of China or Russia. The so-called SideWinder (aka Rattlesnake or T-APT4) group has been on a tear over the past two years, launching more than 1,000 targeted attacks.</p> <p>Noushin Shabab, senior security researcher with Kaspersky, has been tracking SideWinder since 2017 and will share her latest findings on this cyber-espionage team at Black Hat Europe in Singapore this month.</p> <p>"They have been very persistent in their attacks in terms of targeting specific victims over and over, with new malware and newly registered domains," Shabab says. "So even if the target has suspected that a previous attempt had malicious intentions — like with spear-phishing emails and so on — the threat actor has tried to use a new infection vector and use a new domain to try their luck, over and over."</p> <p>SideWinder also has upped its game when it comes to hiding its tracks and deflecting detection — as well as in thwarting researchers. The threat group now executes a more complex attack chain that uses multiple layers of malware, additional obfuscation, and memory-resident malware that leaves no evidence of its presence, she says. Although other well-oiled and advanced threat groups also continue to add new methods of camouflaging their activity, Noushin says, SideWinder stands apart for her with its dogged persistence and high volume of activity.</p> <p>"I think what truly makes them stand out among other APT [advanced persistent threat] actors is the large toolset they have with many different malware families, lots of new spear-phishing documents, and a very large infrastructure," she says. "I haven't seen 1,000 attacks from a single APT" from another group thus far, she adds.</p> <p>Shabab has tracked SideWinder's activity since April 2020, but Kaspersky first reported on SideWinder in January 2018 and believes it's been around since at least 2012. The security firm traditionally avoids attributing threat actors to specific nation-states, but Shabab says her firm's initial research into SideWinder showed the group is tied to an India-based company that was advertising malware analysis and penetration testing services on its website.</p> <p>"We found some context between that company and that threat actor," she says. However, she notes that "over the years, [SideWinder] attribution became more challenging."</p> <p>SideWinder mostly targets military and law enforcement entities in Central and South Asia, but it's also hit foreign affairs, defense, aviation, IT, and legal firms in Asia. Pakistan and Sri Lanka are its main focus of late, according to Kaspersky's research, and it's recently targeted government and related organizations in Afghanistan, China, and Nepal, according to previous research from Trend Micro and from Anomaly.</p> <p>Kaspersky also follows another cyber-spying threat group, dubbed Sidecopy, that copies SideWinder's tactics and techniques on occasion, often pivoting to the newest infection vector SideWinder has</p>

adopted. Unlike some other security research teams, Kaspersky considers Sidecopy separate from SideWinder. It's seen Sidecopy target organizations mainly in India and Afghanistan.

No Zero-Days Required

SideWinder's main initial attack vector consists of sending convincing-looking spear-phishing emails with malware-rigged document attachments to its carefully curated targets. The hacking group doesn't deploy any zero-day exploits, but instead mostly weaponizes known Windows or Android vulnerabilities, including old Microsoft Office flaws, according to Shabab.

That said, in January 2020, researchers at Trend Micro revealed that they had [discovered SideWinder exploiting a zero-day local privilege-escalation vulnerability](#) that affected hundreds of millions of Android phones when it was first published ([CVE-2019-2215](#)).

SideWinder often switches gears if its first attempts don't infect its victims. Shabab has seen the APT abuse the Windows file shortcut feature to mask the malware, for example.

"The interesting thing is we have seen them be quite careful and innovative in the way they approach victims," she says.

On at least two occasions, she says, SideWinder sent empty document attachments with the spear-phishing emails. The document had no content, but a malicious payload was inside. "After a short while, they send a letter [in an email] that apologizes for the empty document they had sent earlier. But that second email had a different malicious payload inside the document," she says. "They were trying everything to make sure they get a foothold into the victim's system."

SideWinder also swaps domains regularly for its command-and-control servers as well as for its download servers. That's mostly to ensure that if a domain gets detected, it still has a way to get to its targets, Shabab explains. Spreading activity across different domains in the attacks is less likely to raise suspicion as well.

Kaspersky's research shows that SideWinder mainly targets Windows for now, but it did find some malicious mobile apps last year when the firm investigated the group's infrastructure domains and servers. "But looking at their large attack infrastructure and large malware family sets they have for Windows, it doesn't seem mobile is their main focus," Shabab says.

Black Hat Talk

Shabab will share technical details in her session at Black Hat Asia next week, entitled "[SideWinder Uncoils to Strike](#)." Those will include how the hacking team has evolved its obfuscation methods for hiding its malware, and folding it into multistage infection chains. She says that investigating SideWinder's attack methods required her to decrypt several layers of encryption and thousands of obfuscation scripts. And "for each one, the decryption key was different," she says.

Shabab plans to provide recommendations on how to use SideWinder indicators of compromise along with specific security defense advice on defending against this APT group. Because it mostly achieves initial infections via known vulns and legitimate features in Windows (such as Microsoft Office), patching and the usual best security practices are key. That means hardening applications with whitelisting or firewall rules, which can help halt additional malicious malware modules from SideWinder's servers, she says.

"It's not very difficult to stop the attack" initially, she says. But if SideWinder gets past that first hurdle and infects the machine in the first phase of the attack, eradicating the attack gets exponentially harder. She adds: "They have lots of techniques to stay undetected longer and stay persistent."

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HEADLINE	05/05 Bitcoin price falls, market risks rise
SOURCE	https://www.foxbusiness.com/markets/bitcoin-price-5-6-2022
GIST	Bitcoin is struggling to stabilize after a day that saw the cryptocurrency fall more than 8% to below \$37,000.

	<p>Bitcoin has traded lower in five of the past seven days and is now down more than 20% year-to-date.</p> <p>Bitcoin is down about 47% from its November record high of \$68,991.</p> <p>Cryptocurrency prices fell Thursday along with the huge plunge in the major stock indexes.</p> <p>Ethereum fell more than 6% to around \$2,700.</p> <p>Of the top 30 cryptocurrencies listed by CoinDesk, 29 were down on the day, according to the Wall Street Journal.</p> <p>Stocks and cryptocurrencies have experienced similar rollercoaster moves.</p> <p>This past year, stocks and cryptocurrencies have reacted to moves in monetary policy.</p> <p>U.S. stocks tanked Thursday, posting the worst session since 2020 as the yield on the 10-Year Treasury rose to 3.066%.</p> <p>Shares soared on Wednesday, after the Federal Reserve raised interest rates by a half a point for the first time in two decades and Chairman Jerome Powell signaled that the economy can avoid a recession.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Ukraine trolls Russia military with an app
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/ukraines-military-is-trolling-putins-military-with-an-app-to-track-russian-deaths-with-live-updates?ref=home
GIST	<p>The Ukrainian military has created an application to show users live updates of just how many Russian soldiers are dying in Ukraine.</p> <p>The name of the app? “Russian ship, go f**k yourself,” an homage to the famous soldier who said the words to a Russian officer shortly before getting captured.</p> <p>The app, which the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine created in concert with Alty, a Ukrainian tech company, can be downloaded by looking up Русский корабль иди нах@й, or Ркин, in the app store. The app also includes information about Russian equipment, the military said.</p> <p>Leonid Goriev, the CEO of Alty, said the company created the app to help bring Ukraine a victory sooner.</p> <p>“We were inspired by the daily work of the specialists of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, who diligently formulated information on the damage of enemy personnel and the Russian Federation technology in their infographics,” Gorev said in a statement shared by the Ukrainian military. “Therefore, on a volunteer basis, we created a handy app with a set of beautiful widgets to track the occupant's losses and bring our victory closer.”</p> <p>A spokesperson for Alty confirmed to The Daily Beast the company made the app.</p> <p>The cheeky app includes instructions for users on how to make the app’s information and latest stats appear on the iPhone’s “Today View” (the side screen with multiple widgets users can access by swiping all the way to the right on the Home Screen) so users don’t even have to click into the app to get the latest information on just how poorly Russia’s military is doing.</p> <p>The casualties for Russia have been staggering. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization estimated in March that up to 40,000 Russians were killed, captured, missing, or suffering from wounds during just the first months of the war. Overall, approximately 24,700 Russian troops have died since the beginning of the war, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said Thursday.</p>

Although Russian forces have been committing atrocities throughout Ukraine, the Russian military hasn't been performing very well from an operational standpoint. They've been having trouble coordinating plans from the top-down. Russian forces weren't able to capture Kyiv at the outset of the invasion as planned, and instead were stuck outside the capital without proper sustainment supplies. Eventually, they had to just up and leave because they couldn't get the job done.

Russian military leadership has even been lying to Russian President Vladimir Putin along the way, misleading him on just how poorly the armed forces are performing, a senior White House official said in March.

And along the way, Putin's apparent interest in helping provide life-sustaining tools on the battlefield to keep the war going as much as he can has been dismal. A photo comparing Russian first aid kits and Ukrainian first aid kits that Russian fighters shared on social media last week shows the Russians are not nearly as prepared to provide life-saving care in crisis situations as Ukrainians are, which is certainly not helping the military keep up the numbers necessary to fight the war.

The app comes at a potentially pivotal moment in the war where tracking casualties might provide up-to-the minute information on which way the wind is blowing. Although Russia has had to regroup and move off the goal of taking Kyiv, Russia has instead set its sights on fighting in Eastern Ukraine in the Donbas. And in the coming days, as Victory Day nears in Russia, the day Russia celebrates the victory in World War II against the Nazis, senior Biden administration officials are warning that Putin might be working to escalate the war, as The Daily Beast reported. Ukrainian officials have suggested that Putin will seek to declare war formally and mobilize even more troops to take on the fight in Ukraine by Victory Day, May 9.

And more mobilization means, inevitably, more Russian troops sent home in body bags.

For now, there is no clear way out of the war, Russian military analysts tell The Daily Beast.

"There is nothing to suggest to us that either country is going to make major concessions for peace or that either military is likely to quit the fight in the near future," Michael Kofman, research program director in the Russia Studies Program at CNA, told The Daily Beast. "If the Russian leadership declares a state of war and begins mobilizing the population, that mobilization... is a very strong indicator that this war is likely to go on much longer and be more costly."

Regardless of whether May 9 leads to massive escalation, all signs point to this war dragging on with no end in sight, according to Rob Lee, a Russian military analyst at the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

"The bad thing for the occupier is that Ukraine gets a vote on this and... they have no reason to stop the war at this point," Lee said. "There are more than a few Ukrainian people who want to take back all the Donbas."

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	05/05 Watchlist individuals arrested at border
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/featured/mayorkas-on-terror-watchlist-individuals-arrested-at-border-weve-got-a-handle-on-it/
GIST	After being posed a question by a member of Congress about the cases of 42 individuals arrested at the southern border who are on the no-fly list and the terror watchlist, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas followed up Sunday by confirming "we know where those 42 individuals are."

Mayorkas told lawmakers during a House Judiciary Committee oversight hearing last week that some of the individuals on the terror watchlist arrested attempting to enter the United States “may be still in detention” and promised to give Congress details on the disposition of each case.

“Let me share with you what happens. They can be removed. They can be placed into custody for criminal prosecution. They could be cooperating in a law enforcement investigation and I don’t intend to provide that data publicly if it’s law enforcement-sensitive,” Mayorkas said on Fox News Sunday. “But we know where those 42 are and I did not want to speak with respect to the disposition of each and every one of them. But we know where they are, and we’ve got our hands on it.”

Asked by host Bret Baier whether Americans should be concerned about those detainees, Mayorkas replied, “They shouldn’t be worried about the 42. We’ve got a handle on it and when I say, Bret, it’s not the Department of Homeland Security alone. It’s the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It’s our entire enforcement and intelligence enterprise.”

According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s [fiscal year 2022 statistics](#), the Office of Field Operations reported 294,352 total encounters with inadmissible individuals and the Border Patrol had 1,662,167 encounters in FY2021. OFO reported 201,053 encounters for FY2022 (Oct. 1, 2021, through Sept. 30, 2022) through March and the Border Patrol reported 1,016,749 encounters.

“The Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB) – also known as the ‘watchlist’ – is the U.S. government’s database that contains sensitive information on terrorist and transnational organized criminal identities,” CBP explains in its separate breakdown of TSDB encounters. “The TSDB originated as the consolidated terrorist watchlist to house information on known or suspected terrorists (KSTs) but has evolved over the last decade to include additional individuals who represent a potential threat to the United States, including members of Transnational Criminal Organizations and known affiliates of watchlisted individuals.”

In 2020, DHS [reported](#) it was now receiving through the DHS Watchlist Service TSDB information on “individuals who may pose a threat to national security because they are known or suspected to be or have been engaged in conduct constituting, in aid of, or related to transnational organized crime, thereby posing a possible threat to national security, and do not otherwise satisfy the requirements for inclusion in the TSDB as KSTs (‘transnational organized crime actors’), consistent with Executive Order 123336 (or successor order) (‘national security threats’) and in support of the White House’s ‘Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime’ (July 19, 2011), National Security Presidential Directive-59/Homeland Security Presidential Directive-24, ‘Biometrics for Identification and Screening to Enhance National Security’ (June 5, 2008), and Executive Order 13863 (March 15, 2019).”

In FY2021, OFO reported 157 encounters at land border crossings of TSDB individuals of all nationalities: 103 at the southwest border and 54 at the northern border. Between ports of entry, the Border Patrol reported 15 such encounters on the southwest border and one on the northern border. In FY2022 up until March, OFO reported 35 TSDB encounters at the southwest border and 96 at the northern border; Border Patrol reported 27 encounters at the southwest border and none at the northern border. Totals for the ports of entry may include multiple encounters of the same individual, CBP notes.

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22 Oct-Mar
Office of Field Operations TSDB Encounters at Land Border Ports of Entry of All Nationalities*						
Southwest Border	116	155	280	72	103	35
Northern Border	217	196	258	124	54	96
Total	333	351	538	196	157	131
U.S. Border Patrol TSDB Encounters Between Ports of Entry of Non-U.S. Citizens						
Southwest Border	2	6	0	3	15	27
Northern Border	0	0	3	0	1	0
Total	2	6	3	3	16	27
Percentage of Total USBP Encounters	0.0007%	0.0015%	0.0004%	0.0007%	0.0010%	0.0027%

(CBP)

“TSDB watchlisted individuals encountered by the CBP Office of Field Operations at land ports of entry prior to entry into the United States are generally denied admission to our country upon presentation, barring justification for their arrest,” CBP said. “TSDB watchlisted individuals encountered by the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) after entering the country without inspection are detained and removed, to the extent possible, or turned over to another government agency for subsequent detention or law enforcement action, as appropriate.”

At the April 28 Judiciary Committee hearing, some lawmakers cited congressional inquiry data revealed in a Fox News [story](#) that said since Jan. 20, 2021, Border Patrol and the Office of Field Operations have “arrested 42 subjects who were on the terror watchlist and attempted to enter the United States illegally.”

“Secretary, have any of the 42 illegal migrants on the terrorist watch list or no fly list encountered on our southwest border been released into the United States?” Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) asked Mayorkas. “Ranking Member Jordan, as I mentioned before, I will provide that data to you with respect to the disposition of each one,” Mayorkas replied. “I do not know the answer to your question.”

In recent years, terror groups have continued to urge hijrah, or migration to lands where groups have a base of operations such as Syria or Afghanistan, for those who are able to make the journey while

exponentially increasing homegrown violent extremism encouragement for others to stay where they are and commit attacks on suitable targets where they already live. The reasons for this are many. Terror groups largely call for low-skilled attacks from their followers (such as vehicle ramming, shooting soft targets, etc.) that do not require a training camp and can be planned with the least amount of detection, allowing terror movements to force-multiply through lone actors who may never even have contact with other members of the terror group. When training is advised (such as in constructing an IED) this can be conducted via distance learning (called “open-source jihad” by al-Qaeda and “Just Terror” by ISIS) in the form of detailed instructions — as well as counseling on target selection, weapons choice, attack timing, etc. — in easily accessible online magazines and videos. Less suspicion is aroused in the planning phase when adherents to a terror movement don’t have to cross borders, bearing in mind the American and European foreign fighters who were caught at some point in their journeys to try to join ISIS in Syria. Homegrown attackers know their city and its vulnerable points and are less likely to attract attention when they know local customs and language. Local attackers have established identification with which to purchase a weapon, rent a truck, or acquire other potential items or access needed for their planned attack; terror groups also focus on attempting to recruit those whose established employment allows them to commit a substantial insider attack. Homegrown lone actors allow a terror group like ISIS to keep fighters on the ground in their claimed provinces where they need them, instead of attempting to handle the logistics and expenses of exporting jihadists to the United States where they would most likely raise alarm bells along the way.

If supporters are unable to join jihadists in provinces where the terror group is active, “then pick up your arms to attack Kuffar [disbelievers],” [said](#) an article bylined by ISIS fighters in Pakistan in the April issue of *Voice of Hind*, an English-language magazine published by ISIS supporters in India. “And if you lack weapons, then pick up kitchen knives, daggers and home-based poisons, they should be sufficient for you.”

One recent case in which an extremist traveled to the United States and soon after committed an attack was the Jan. 15 hostage-taking at the Congregation Beth Israel synagogue in Colleyville, Texas. Malik Akram, a British national with a criminal record, had been on an MI5 watchlist in 2020 as a “subject of interest” but was later removed after the agency determined he did not pose a terrorist threat.

Akram had not previously visited the United States, was reportedly not known to U.S. intelligence or law enforcement, and entered the country Dec. 29 at JFK Airport in New York via the [Visa Waiver Program](#), which “enables most citizens or nationals of [40] participating countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business for stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa.” An unnamed Homeland Security official [told](#) the *Washington Post* that Akram was vetted “through several federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies’ databases ... No derogatory information associated with this individual was found prior to his travel to the United States or upon his arrival.” He gave his address as the Queens Hotel but there is no record that he stayed there after arriving in the U.S.

After the attack, several Republican senators raised concerns to Mayorkas and Secretary of State Tony Blinken about both Akram’s entry and the Visa Waiver Program in general, stating in a [letter](#) that “in light of the numerous red flags in Akram’s record, we are extremely concerned about the adequacy of our visa adjudication and admission screening protocols.”

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HEADLINE	05/05 Christchurch attack inquiry: online role?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/05/christchurch-attack-inquiry-to-examine-if-australian-terrorist-was-radicalised-online?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=4212689
GIST	The online activities of the Australian white supremacist who opened fire on two New Zealand mosques – and how much of a role social media and internet platforms played in his radicalisation – will form part of a coroner’s inquiry into the deaths of 51 Muslim worshippers in the 2019 Christchurch terrorist attack.

But the presiding coroner, Brigitte Windley, who announced the scope of her inquiry in a decision released on Thursday, has warned of “monumental hurdles” to exploring the terrorist’s online activities – including Brenton Tarrant’s attempts to wipe parts of his digital footprint before committing the attacks.

The 15 March 2019 attack was planned for an online audience; the gunman streamed live footage and posted a manifesto online before he shot dozens of people at two mosques during Friday prayers.

Windley’s decision to include the terrorist’s online activity in her investigation of what factors caused the deaths was welcomed by some Muslim groups, who had asked her at a preliminary hearing in February to examine the influence of social and digital media platforms.

“This is a landmark moment for the accountability of digital platforms,” said Aliya Danzeisen, the national coordinator of the Islamic Women’s Council of [New Zealand](#). She added that the coroner had “opened the door to investigating the responsibility” of online platforms in the radicalisation of Tarrant and others.

Many of the bereaved families had earlier decried the government’s decision to exclude the actions of private companies – including online platforms – from the royal commission into the attacks, [which published its report in December 2020](#).

Windley said she would focus on Tarrant’s online activities between 2014 and 2017, during which he travelled the world extensively, and before he moved to New Zealand from Australia and began planning the attack in earnest. It was a window not covered by earlier investigations, she said.

It is known that Tarrant spent particular time on YouTube and the message boards 4chan and 8chan.

But the coroner said she would not scrutinise the actions taken by online platforms to monitor their users for extremist content unless her inquiry uncovered evidence that Tarrant’s online activities were a significant cause of his radicalisation. His “psychological makeup” and “upbringing in provincial New South Wales” were among other factors, she said.

Windley has ordered Tarrant to divulge the location of a hard drive missing from his Dunedin flat after the attacks, and whether information on it was uploaded to cloud-based storage. [The gunman was sentenced in August 2020](#) to life in prison without the chance of parole after pleading guilty to 51 counts of murder, 40 of attempted murder and a terrorism charge.

Tarrant’s guilty plea, which averted a criminal trial, meant the evidence against him was never heard, and the royal commission was conducted entirely behind closed doors. In a report of more than 800 pages, it concluded that while New Zealand’s counter-terrorism agencies had focused on Islamist terror threats to the exclusion of other ideologies, Tarrant’s attack could not have been prevented “except by chance”.

Some families bereaved in the massacre, New Zealand’s worst modern-day mass killing, have over the past three years raised what they say are lingering questions about whether their relatives’ deaths could have been prevented – either in the lead-up to or immediate aftermath of the attack. For many, the lack of access to material investigators had relied upon – some of which will now be provided to them as part of the coronial inquiry – has prompted distrust in official conclusions about the case.

In her 99-page decision outlining the inquiry’s scope, Windley acknowledged the “information void” to date for the bereaved families and survivors, but stopped short of expanding her inquiry to cover everything they had asked her to investigate.

It will include:

- The events of 15 March 2019, from the moment the attack began.
- How the police, ambulance service and nearby Christchurch hospital responded.
- An examination of the police’s conclusion that Tarrant acted alone.
- The final moments of those who died and whether their injuries could have been survivable with different treatment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether the police granting Tarrant a gun licence despite his lack of appropriate references – allowing him to legally amass semiautomatic weapons – could be directly linked to the attack, and if so, how procedures for gun licensing have changed since. How New Zealanders can detect and respond to people who pose a risk of violent extremism in future. <p>A public inquest would be held into the emergency response to the attacks, Windley said. She had not yet determined whether any other part of her inquiry would be heard publicly.</p> <p>An inquest date has yet to be scheduled. The inquiry's timeframe is unknown.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Attack in Israel: 3 killed, 3 injured
SOURCE	https://www.timesofisrael.com/3-killed-several-injured-in-suspected-terror-attack-in-elad/
GIST	<p>Three people were killed and three others seriously hurt in a terror attack in the central Israeli city of Elad on Thursday night, medics said.</p> <p>The attack came at the end of Israel's Independence Day, and followed a wave of terror attacks in Israel and the West Bank in recent weeks, and repeated threats by Palestinian terror groups over the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.</p> <p>According to eyewitnesses, two terrorists attacked several people with an ax and a knife at a central park and a nearby road in the largely ultra-Orthodox city. At least one of the wounded was in critical condition, and up to seven were hurt in the attack.</p> <p>"There are two unconscious people here," a man could be heard screaming in a phone call with the United Hatzalah emergency service. "There is so much blood... these are wounds from an ax," the man said in the call.</p> <p>The Magen David Adom ambulance service reported the three fatalities. The victims were not immediately identified.</p> <p>MDA paramedics also reported another person was lightly wounded "during a fight with the terrorists."</p> <p>Police confirmed that the incident was a terror attack. It took place minutes after Independence Day events had concluded, in the park crowded with Israelis celebrating the holiday.</p> <p>Two victims, one in critical condition and another seriously hurt, arrived at Beilinson hospital in Petah Tikva with head wounds. A third victim in serious condition was rushed to the Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan.</p> <p>Dr. Tzion Zibli, head of neurosurgery at Sheba, said the victim in his 20s was fighting for his life, had a "severe head injury" and was en route to surgery.</p> <p>Police initially said witnesses told them one of the attackers used a firearm and the other had an ax or a large knife. But MDA said the injuries did not appear to be from gunfire, but from a "sharp implement." Medics described the attack as a "very difficult event."</p> <p>"A 40-year-old man was lying next to a car on Ibn Gabirol Street with many stab wounds to his body; at this stage we realized he was dead," MDA medic Alon Rizkan said.</p> <p>"I continued down the stairs toward the park, and found two more unconscious victims lying several meters from each other. Both of them were declared dead," Rizkan added.</p> <p>"In the park we saw a 75-year-old man lying on the ground, semiconscious, with severe injuries to his upper body. He could not speak and responded with gestures," MDA medic Idit Levy said.</p>

“It was a very difficult sight, people were sprawled on the road and on the sidewalk from the square to the park, and cries for help were heard from every corner,” Zaka volunteer Aaron Zilberman said.

“We were in the synagogue when the gabai (warden) shouted, ‘Terrorist, terrorist,’” an eyewitness named Mordechai Chachmon told reporters at the scene.

“We went outside and we saw [one of the terrorists] running along a path... and hitting anyone in front of him with an ax to the head. Both of [the terrorists] were shouting Allahu Akbar [God is greatest].”

Chachmon said a security guard fired at the terrorists, but missed.

Police launched a manhunt for the two suspects and blocked off several roads in the area. In a statement, a police spokesperson said a helicopter was being used to search for a vehicle that had fled the scene.

The terrorists were not immediately identified, but police officials said their “working hypothesis” was that they were Palestinians from the West Bank. Elad, a town of some 50,000 residents, is located a short distance to the west of the West Bank security barrier, which has been frequently breached by terrorists carrying out attacks.

Local authorities ordered residents of Elad to remain in their homes amid fears the pair may attack again.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz and Israel Defense Forces chief Aviv Kohavi held a situational assessment following the attack, Gantz’s office said. Public Security Minister Omer Barlev and police chief Kobi Shabtai also held an assessment at the scene with law enforcement officials.

In the wake of the attack, Israeli security officials extended until Sunday the closure of the West Bank and Gaza — which was put in place on Tuesday afternoon, ahead of Memorial Day and Independence Day, and had been supposed to end overnight Thursday-Friday.

Palestinian terror groups praised the attack, although none immediately took responsibility.

The Hamas terror group called the attack “a heroic operation” in response to Jewish Israelis visiting the Temple Mount holy site earlier Thursday. Hundreds visited the flashpoint hilltop, which is Judaism’s holiest site and Islam’s third-holiest, in the first time since Passover. The site was closed to Jewish visitors for the end of Ramadan.

Earlier Thursday, Palestinians clashed with police on the Temple Mount after the site was reopened for Jews after the two-week closure. Hamas had threatened to retaliate if Jewish visitors were allowed to “storm” the holy site.

“Our people will continue their struggle and their defense of the Al-Aqsa Mosque with every means. Their blows will strike the Zionists and the settlers wherever they are,” said Hamas spokesperson Abd al-Latif al-Qanou.

In a speech last Saturday, Hamas’s Gaza chief Yahya Sinwar threatened violent consequences should Israelis continue visiting the site. He also urged Palestinians to strike Israelis with whatever they had — including axes. “Let everyone who has a rifle, ready it. And if you don’t have a rifle, ready your cleaver or an ax, or a knife,” Sinwar said.

“This is the practical implementation of what the resistance warned: Al-Aqsa is a red line,” Hamas official Hazem Qasim said Thursday.

Islamic Jihad also praised the Elad attack as a “heroic operation.”

“For settler gangs to defile Al-Aqsa — this crosses red lines,” senior terror group member Mohammad Hmeid said.

The attack came as tensions have risen sharply between Israel and the Palestinians in recent weeks, against the backdrop of repeated terror attacks in Israel and the West Bank that left 16 others dead.

Thursday’s attack brought the number of people killed in terror attacks in Israel and the West Bank since March 21 this year, to 19.

The army has stepped up its West Bank activities in an attempt to crack down on the spiraling violence. The ensuing raids sparked clashes that left at least 26 Palestinians dead. Many of those took part in the clashes, while others appeared to have been civilians.

In an unusual move, Hamas’s military wing claimed a shooting attack in the West Bank settlement of Ariel on Friday that left an Israeli security guard dead.

The “heroic” attack “will not be the last one, with God’s help,” the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades said.

Palestinians and Israeli forces have clashed repeatedly at the Temple Mount over the past few weeks. The violence echoed scenes from last year, when rioting at the site helped spark a war between Israel and Gaza-based terror groups led by Hamas.

Ever since the May 2021 war, Hamas, which seeks to destroy Israel, has threatened to fire rockets at Israel if it violated the organization’s “red lines” in Jerusalem. The terror group has hailed its “deterrence” against Israel in the contested capital as a key achievement of the war, which wrought widespread destruction in Gaza.

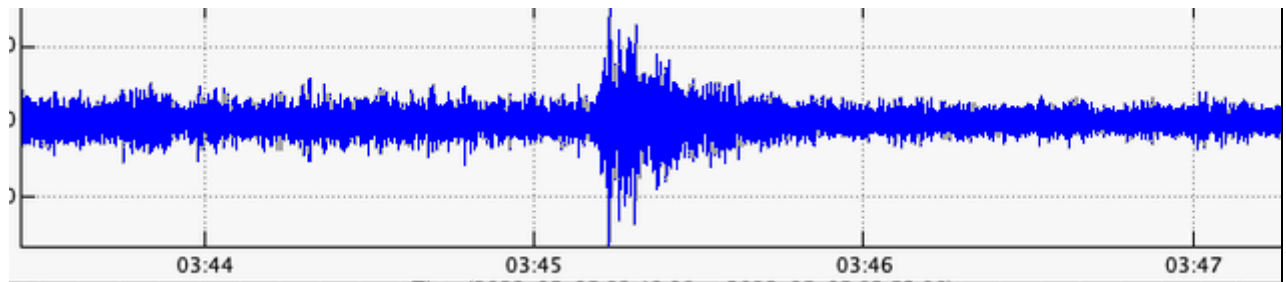
Sinwar said on Saturday that the terror group “will not hesitate to take any steps” if Israel “violates” Al-Aqsa Mosque.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	05/05 Triumphant Sounders fans shake the Earth
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/triumphant-sounders-fans-celebrate-spread-the-love-on-twitter/
GIST	<p>Seattle responded with exuberant delight when the Sounders separated themselves from their MLS brethren with a Wednesday night victory that thrust them into the realm of the world elites, as Times columnist Larry Stone wrote.</p> <p>Along with making history for Seattle and the league, the Sounders earned \$500,000 and a berth in the FIFA Club World Cup, which will likely be played in 2023. English Premier League side Chelsea FC is the reigning Club World Cup champion.</p> <p>Wednesday’s 3-0 win at Lumen Field was a very big deal for the Sounders, for Seattle and for North American soccer.</p> <p>Excitement was so high in the stadium it actually shook the earth, according to the Pacific Northwest Seismic Network.</p>



The happiness continued, with triumphant fans on Twitter basking in the glory.

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HEADLINE	05/06 Police trainers far-right ties teaching cops
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-police-extremism/
GIST	<p>On social media, Richard Whitehead is a warrior for the American right. He has praised extremist groups. He has called for public executions of government officials he sees as disloyal to former President Donald Trump. In a post in 2020, he urged law enforcement officers to disobey COVID-19 public-health orders from “tyrannical governors,” adding: “We are on the brink of civil war.”</p> <p>Whitehead also has a day job. He trains police officers around the United States.</p> <p>The Idaho-based law enforcement consultant has taught at least 560 police officers and other public safety workers in 85 sessions in 12 states over the past four years, according to a Reuters analysis of public records from the departments that hired him. A Washington state training commission in 2015 temporarily banned Whitehead from advertising courses on its website because of instructional materials that referred to a turban-wearing police officer as a “towel head” and contained cartoons of women in bikinis, according to emails from the commission to Whitehead that were reviewed by Reuters. Other marketing literature touted Whitehead’s “deception detection” technique that, among other things, teaches officers not to trust sexual-assault claimants if they use the word “we” in referring to themselves and their assailant.</p> <p>The commission was responding to a student complaint citing “offensive slurs” and “blatant misogyny.” Whitehead said in an interview that the commission had given too much credence to one student’s opinion and caused him to lose business. Since then, he said, he has expanded the section of his course that caused that controversy, adding more “pot-stirring” material, including a slide that ridicules transgender people: “Suspect is a gender-fluid assigned-male-at-birth wearing non-gender-specific clothing born Caucasian but identifies as a mountain panda.” Whitehead said such barbs are intended to push back against pressures on law enforcement to espouse left-wing views on gender or race.</p> <p>Whitehead is part of a trend in pushing a radical-right political agenda to American police forces. He’s one of five police trainers identified by Reuters whose political commentary on social media has echoed extremist opinions or who have public ties to far-right figures. They work for one or more of 35 training firms that advertised at least 10 police or public-safety training sessions in 2021, according to a Reuters analysis of scheduling data from policetraining.net, the main site where local departments connect with trainers. The news organization also reviewed materials describing classes by specific training companies.</p> <p>The five trainers have aired views including the belief in a vote-rigging conspiracy to unseat Trump in the 2020 election. One trainer attended Trump’s January 6, 2021, rally at the U.S. Capitol that devolved into a riot, injuring more than 100 police officers. Two of the trainers have falsely asserted that prominent Democrats including President Joe Biden are pedophiles, a core tenet of the QAnon conspiracy theory. Four have endorsed or posted records of their past interactions with far-right extremist figures, including prominent “constitutional sheriff” leader David Clarke Jr. and Proud Boys leader Joe Biggs, who is being prosecuted for his involvement in the Capitol riots.</p> <p>Whitehead adheres to the constitutional sheriff philosophy, which holds that county sheriffs should ignore any law they find unconstitutional. The growing movement claims sheriffs are the supreme law</p>

enforcement authority in their jurisdictions – more powerful even than the U.S. president. A spokesperson for the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association disputed the characterization of its views as extreme and said it was neither right- nor left-wing.

In interviews, Whitehead and the other four trainers also said their beliefs are neither extreme nor far-right. Some said posts that appeared to urge the overthrow of the U.S. government were intended as humorous or figurative. They said they keep their politics separate from their training, which they said focused on officer safety.

Whitehead was listed in a database of members of the Oath Keepers, a far-right anti-government group, that was leaked in September by the nonprofit Distributed Denial of Secrets, which says it aims to publish data in the public interest. The members list included some 15 other people who identified themselves as law enforcement trainers and dozens more who said they were retired officers or trainers, or firearms instructors, according to a Reuters review of the data. The anti-government militia group focuses on recruiting police and military personnel, according to some experts who track extremism, and claims to have thousands of members. Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes was charged with seditious conspiracy for his role in the Jan. 6 Capitol riots. He has pleaded not guilty.

Kellye SoRelle – an attorney for the Oath Keepers who has called herself the group’s acting president during Rhodes’ pretrial detention – did not respond to a request for comment on the law enforcement officers listed in the database.

Whitehead told Reuters he was an Oath Keeper for about a year, in 2016 and 2017, and continues to support its ideology of “defending the constitution.” He said he filmed a promotional video at an event of a far-right militia, the Real Three Percenters, when Whitehead ran for sheriff of Kootenai County, Idaho in 2020. He praised the Three Percenters, who train for armed resistance of what they call a tyrannical U.S. government, as being “all about community” and also defending the constitution.

Private trainers work in an unregulated industry that largely has evaded the heightened scrutiny of U.S. policing in recent years in the wake of high-profile police killings of civilians. Trainers like those identified by Reuters, a half dozen police-training specialists say, highlight a lack of standards and oversight that allows instruction that can often exaggerate the threats that officers face, making them more likely to respond with excessive force in stressful situations.

U.S. law enforcement officers receive far less initial training at police academies than their counterparts in comparable countries, said Arjun Sethi, a Georgetown University adjunct law professor and policing specialist. That opens “immense commercial opportunities” for private trainers to fill the void with ongoing training of active-duty officers, often “in a politicized manner” that normalizes biased policing against Black people and other communities, he said.

Private trainers typically advertise their courses to police and sheriffs’ departments, who often pay for their officers to take them. But individuals can also seek out and pay for courses on their own to satisfy government or department requirements for ongoing training. The courses vary widely in content and in price, from hundreds to thousands of dollars per attendee.

State-based oversight institutions, often called Peace Officer Standards and Training agencies, set requirements for police training, such as the types of classes and minimum teaching hours that officers must complete. But the institutions have little power in most states to influence course content or set standards for private police trainers, in part due to budget constraints, said Randy Shrewsberry, a former police officer. He saw unregulated police training as such a problem that in 2017 he founded the California-based Institute for Criminal Justice Training Reform.

Some officers will subscribe to the extremist ideology of their trainers, Shrewsberry said, because they perceive instructors as having authority and credibility. “Bad training is instilling bad behavior,” he added. Whitehead disputed the assertion that police trainers need more oversight, noting that many states review course material. “That seems regulated to me,” he said.

Support for QAnon, election conspiracies

On social media, some trainers have echoed core tenets of the QAnon conspiracy theory, which holds that some prominent Democrats and Hollywood celebrities are part of a cabal of Satanist pedophiles and cannibals.

Kansas-based trainer Darrel Schenck teaches firearms classes through his own company as well as through the law enforcement division of the National Rifle Association (NRA), the leading U.S. gun-rights lobby. Schenck has voiced the belief that Democrats are pedophiles, called reports of violence during the U.S. Capitol riots “fake news,” and declared the 2020 election illegitimate, commenting: “election fraud is the real pandemic.”

In an interview, Schenck stressed he was a professional whose personal views do not affect his training. The NRA did not respond to a request for comment.

Police instructor Adam Davis characterized Biden as a “puppet and a pedophile” on Facebook. In other posts, he slammed people who protest racial bias in policing as “pawns” in the “scheme to destroy this nation.”

Davis has worked as a contractor for Street Cop Training, one of the biggest private providers of law enforcement instruction. He spoke at an industry trade conference hosted by the company in October, and he gives lectures to police agencies nationwide. Street Cop Training did not respond to requests for comment.

Davis said in an interview that he “did not know for a fact” whether Biden was a pedophile. He said his criticism of anti-racism protesters was based on the property destruction that occurred during protests in various cities in 2020. He characterized his political views as “middle of the road.”

Texts with a Proud Boys leader

The lack of regulation gives individual trainers wide latitude to teach America’s police officers whatever they see fit. For trainer Tim Kennedy, that means training in martial arts, sharpshooting and strength-building.

In 2020, Kennedy posted on Instagram a video of himself taking out trash in combat gear, captioned: “When you want to boogaloo but you still have a bunch of honey-dos to do,” referring to household chores. That was an apparent reference to the anti-government “boogaloo” movement, whose adherents anticipate – and sometimes call for, or train for – a revolution toppling the federal government or a second U.S. civil war.

Two months later, Kennedy posted a photo of himself wearing a Hawaiian shirt and aiming a rifle. Hawaiian shirts are a trademark of the boogaloo movement. The picture was captioned: “If you choose to be an a--hole... I picked out a special shirt for the occasion.”

Kennedy said in an interview that he does not support the boogaloo movement. He said he loves Hawaiian shirts and owned many before they became a boogaloo symbol.

Kennedy’s Twitter account shows that he has been an associate of Joe Biggs, a leading organizer of the right-wing Proud Boys group who is being prosecuted for his role in the U.S. Capitol riots. Their online interactions were as recent as May 2018, several months before Biggs’ Twitter account was suspended.

In Twitter posts, Kennedy discussed going on motorcycle rides with Biggs; named Biggs as his Interior Secretary in an imaginary presidential cabinet; and posted screenshots of their text-message conversation about an anticipated rally by antifa, the loosely organized left-wing anti-fascism movement.

“Going down town to cause havoc,” wrote Biggs.

“Same. Sounds like a date!” Kennedy replied.

Biggs is currently detained pending trial. He was charged for his role in the Capitol riots with six counts including obstruction of an official proceeding, obstruction of law enforcement, destruction of government property, and conspiracy. Reached through a lawyer, Biggs declined to comment.

Kennedy told Reuters he believed Biggs had taken a “radical” turn and said he had not had any recent contact with him. He denied ever being friends with Biggs. “I’m pretty anti-antifa, and I’m pretty anti-far right radical,” Kennedy said. “I like the middle, where logic and rational people exist.”

Kennedy said he held about 200 training sessions across the United States in 2021. He offers individual officers a discount on his courses, which cost between \$400 and \$900 per student, because most police agencies refuse to pay for Kennedy’s training out of what he described as “political” reasons and “ignorance.” Kennedy said his courses focus on cultural understanding and de-escalation techniques as well as physical training.

One teaching method he cited, however, was a chart of different mental states – each assigned its own color – describing levels of preparedness, or the lack of it, to respond to threatening situations. The chart was developed by former U.S. Marine Col. Jeff Cooper, now deceased, “as a means of setting one’s mind into the proper condition when exercising lethal violence,” according to a 2004 written commentary attributed to Cooper.

Kennedy features a fighting practice in an instructional video, showing him and students wrestling and trying to tackle one another. He described the practice as a form of “stress inoculation” that aims to improve officers’ performance under pressure.

“The point of that is to induce stress onto a person, and then we make them try to solve a problem,” such as intervening in a simulated mugging, he said. Such training is needed, Kennedy said, because officers are at “unprecedented” risk of death and assault. Police reform measures taken in the wake of the 2020 racial-justice protests across the United States have left them even less protected, he said.

Long-term data on police officer deaths shows a different trend. Officer deaths caused by felonies last year increased to 73, compared to an average of 49 in the previous four years. But 2021 was an anomaly, as crime surged amid the coronavirus pandemic and related economic turmoil.

Over the long term, police deaths per 100,000 officers, from both felonies and accidents, plunged from 81 to 20 between 1970 and 2016, a decline of 75%, according to a 2019 analysis of historical Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data in the journal *Criminology & Public Policy*. Deaths from crimes fell even faster than accidental deaths over the period.

“The number of line-of-duty deaths has declined dramatically over the last five decades,” the study concluded. “The ‘war on cops’ thesis is not supported by any evidence.”

Kennedy disputed the FBI data and said he would send figures contradicting it. He never did. The FBI declined to comment on the study of officer deaths and on the police trainers identified by Reuters.

In light of such data showing declining dangers to officers, many training agencies long ago abandoned training that emphasized putting officers through simulations of threatening situations, said Gil Kerlikowske, who led the police departments of Seattle and Buffalo, New York, before serving as commissioner of the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol from 2014 until 2017.

“That’s the worst kind of training to give officers today, to make them feel more vulnerable,” Kerlikowske said. “You want people to have an awareness” of violent threats, “but you don’t want them to be so hypersensitive that it impacts everything they do.”

The mindset that trainers impart, such as a feeling of constant vulnerability, can be more influential than the technical knowledge they share, said Seth Stoughton, a law professor at the University of South Carolina and former police officer with expertise in law enforcement training. Stoughton said studies show that training which overemphasizes life-threatening situations can impart a “warrior mentality,” convincing the officers that they face constant deadly threats.

In a promotional video that Kennedy released in 2020, Chris Jackson, an officer who works for a California police agency operated by a Native American tribe, said Kennedy’s course had “opened his eyes to the world” and changed the way he would respond to threats. “You never want to be a victim of anything,” he said in the video.

Jackson told Reuters in an interview that the training, which his agency paid for, made him more aware of potential threats and prepared to respond with less hesitation. “Sometimes you gotta do what you gotta do to eliminate the threat,” he said.

Asked whether Kennedy’s social media posts referring to the boogaloo movement and his association with Joe Biggs affected his perception of the training, Jackson said it did not. “What he does on his own time is his own deal,” he said.

Moonlighting on Jan. 6

Ryan Morris, founder of Pennsylvania-based training firm Tripwire Operations Group, said in an interview that he posts political content on social media to attract customers. “It’s all marketing,” he said. “We put it out there to all different realms, hoping to spark some kind of conversation ... and then we generate classes out of that.”

In social posts reviewed by Reuters, Morris and other Tripwire trainers have cast the 2020 election as a socialist plot to seize the U.S. government, echoing Trump’s false stolen-election claims. “You have just witnessed a coup, the overthrow of the US free election system, the end of our constitutional republic, and the merge of capitalism into the slide toward socialism,” read a Facebook post that Morris shared about a month after the 2020 election.

Tripwire trains first responders and military personnel in explosives handling, shooting and de-escalation. Morris told Reuters that he and several other Tripwire trainers were “employed” at the Jan. 6, 2021, rally at the U.S. Capitol that devolved into a riot. He declined to say who hired them or how specifically Tripwire staffers were employed. He said Tripwire is sometimes hired to help law enforcement agencies or to “protect high-level executives,” because its staff consists of bomb technicians and active law enforcement officers.

Morris retired from his part-time position as a police officer in Washington Township, Pennsylvania, in early March. The township declined to comment beyond saying Morris no longer works there.

On the day of the rally, the official Tripwire Twitter account posted a link to a since-deleted Instagram photo. The post indicated the image was taken at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., midway into the three-hour breach of the building. Morris said he could not recall what was pictured in the deleted post, and that neither he nor any other Tripwire employees entered the Capitol building on Jan. 6.

Tripwire held about 50 classes in 2021, of which roughly half were attended by law enforcement officers, according to Morris. Law enforcement agencies, non-profit organizations, or officers themselves typically cover tuition, which ranges from \$250 for a basic shooting class to \$2,000 for more specialized training in how to handle explosives.

Tripwire instructors are politically neutral when it comes to training, Morris said. But political views are sometimes expressed in class, he said, because “law enforcement, military have certain mindsets. I’ll just leave it at that.”

‘Political correctness’

Richard Whitehead, the Idaho consultant, started his training firm in 1995 during his 25-year career in the sheriff's department of Travis County, Texas. He moved to Idaho and, in 2020, ran for sheriff of Kootenai County. During his campaign, he handed out cards identifying himself as an Oath Keeper. He ran on a "constitutional sheriff" platform, he said in an interview. Whitehead lost in the primary, placing third of four candidates.

Adherents to the constitutional-sheriff movement consider the federal government a grave threat to U.S. citizens. They argue that local law enforcement is a higher authority, with the power to countermand the decisions of legislatures, courts and presidents. They have advocated that sheriffs refuse to uphold certain laws, involving, for instance, background checks of gun buyers. Whitehead said he campaigned for sheriff because he wanted to block the government from imposing "unconstitutional" limits on citizens, including pandemic-safety regulations such as mask mandates or business restrictions.

Whitehead primarily trains police officers. He also advises a range of other public safety workers, including dispatchers, jailers and paramedics. At a paramedic training in Sandpoint, Idaho, in April 2020, he put on an "appalling show," according to Lieutenant David Ramsey, who described the event in an email to his supervisor two days after the class. Reuters obtained the email in a public-records request.

Ramsey wrote that Whitehead dismissed the COVID-19 pandemic as a joke, called infection-control measures unconstitutional and showed a video mocking women for not saying what they mean. After showing students an image of a police car with an LGBTQ flag on the side, according to Ramsey's email, Whitehead asked the class: "What's next? We have to have a Muslim flag to satisfy the goat f---ers?"

Contacted by Reuters, Ramsey acknowledged writing the email but did not comment further.

Whitehead said he was not aware of Ramsey's complaint. He said he stood by his view that putting an LGBTQ flag on a police car could create a "slippery slope" that drags law enforcement officers away from their mission of fighting crime. He denied making the comment about a "Muslim flag."

Ozzie Knezovich is the sheriff in Spokane County, Washington, just across the state line from the Idaho county where Whitehead ran for sheriff. He slammed Whitehead's ties to militias and the constitutional sheriffs movement during his campaign. But Knezovich never realized until he was contacted by Reuters that Whitehead had been hired by the Spokane sheriff's office to run 15 deputy trainings since 2015.

Knezovich, shocked that an instructor from "the lunatic fringe" had trained his own deputies, said he would ensure it didn't happen again. The sheriff said a now-retired training coordinator had selected Whitehead.

"I'll be having a conversation with my training unit to take somebody off the list," the sheriff said.

Whitehead gave a Reuters reporter permission to attend a training he gave last June for police officers in Killeen, Texas. In that class, Whitehead referred to COVID-19 as the "China flu" and mocked transgender people. He also blasted some states' efforts to end the "qualified immunity" legal doctrine that gives officers broad protection from civil lawsuits when they injure or kill suspects. "If qualified immunity goes away, that takes away your ability to make a mistake," he said.

In an interview after the session, Whitehead said his class was about teaching officers "bulletproof" methods of documenting incidents on the job, and "not becoming susceptible to the winds of political correctness and appeasement."

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HEADLINE	05/05 Under Antarctic reservoir ancient water
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/deep-under-the-antarctic-ice-scientists-discover-vast-reservoir-of-ancient-water-11651773601?mod=hp_lead_pos11

A vast reservoir of ancient water has been found thousands of feet under the ice in western Antarctica, scientists said in [a paper published Thursday](#) in the journal Science.

Researchers had long suspected but never before established the existence of such [hidden pockets of Antarctic groundwater](#), which they believe act to lessen friction between ice sheets and underlying bedrock to make the ice more prone to slide from the continent's interior toward the surrounding ocean.

The first-of-its-kind discovery—made possible by an electromagnetic field-measuring technique that is rarely used in polar environments—shows that there's far more water under the Antarctic ice than scientists realized. It also adds to a growing body of evidence showing the [complex computer models scientists use to calculate](#) Antarctic ice loss and the resulting sea level rise are incomplete.

"Because there were no observations of groundwater prior to our study, it hasn't really been incorporated in our models of understanding like how ice flows," said Chloe Gustafson, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California, San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography and a co-author of the paper. "I don't know if you could say we're underestimating ice loss, but we are missing a process in trying to understand how ice moves off the continent."

Slawek Tulaczyk, a University of California, Santa Cruz professor of Earth science who wasn't involved in the new research, called the finding an "intellectual template for understanding the water world beneath the ice" in most of western Antarctica as well as parts of the continent's eastern region. "It's kind of satisfying for me," Dr. Tulaczyk added, "because it more or less kind of confirms what we expected."

Most of Antarctica is covered with a thick ice sheet, the edges of which periodically slide into the surrounding Southern Ocean to form floating ice shelves. Friction associated with the sliding and heat rising from Earth's core together form streams of meltwater just below the sheet, lubricating the ice in some areas and facilitating those areas' glissade off the rock and into the ocean.

Kerry Key, an associate professor of Earth and environmental sciences at Columbia University and another co-author of the paper, likened those mobile areas of ice, known as ice streams, to chilly Slip 'N Slides. "The streams control how fast Antarctica will push ice out into the ocean and cause sea level rise," he said, adding that they can transport ice at speeds of up to 10 feet a day.

The newly discovered reservoir, a layer of water-saturated sediment nearly 2 kilometers thick in some places, was detected nearly 3,000 feet below the previously characterized Whillans Ice Stream.

"Think of it like a sponge," Dr. Gustafson said of the sediment layer. "Water can come out of that sponge, and contribute to the Slip 'N Slide flow, or the sponge can soak up water, and take water away from the Slip 'N Slide and make it flow slower."

For now, the study authors said, the pressure of the ice atop the sediment layer keeps the reservoir water from rising. But as [the climate warms and thins the ice](#), the water could move upward into the ice stream above. That change [could speed Antarctic ice loss](#) by increasing the speed of the stream, and transporting the ice it carries more quickly toward the ocean.

The steady flow of ice streams like Whillans makes it hard to study the layers beneath them. Drilling can't reach deep enough before the ice shifts and potentially shears off the drill bit, according to Dr. Key, and seismic observations and airborne radar commonly used for other Antarctic research have trouble penetrating layers below the ice.

So the researchers behind the new study turned to magnetotelluric imaging, in which instruments placed in pits on the ice gauge how much of the electromagnetic energy generated in Earth's atmosphere and surrounding magnetic fields has penetrated the ground below. Saltwater, freshwater, ice and sediment conduct that energy differently, and the instruments can detect these differences to create a sort of map of the subsurface terrain.

	<p>Drs. Key and Gustafson and two of their colleagues deployed instruments across the 60-mile-wide ice stream, taking readings at nearly four dozen locations. The readings showed not only the depth and existence of the reservoir but also that it holds a mix of saltwater and freshwater.</p> <p>Some of the water at the reservoir's deepest point may have been there since the last time this part of Antarctica was ice-free—and covered in a shallow ocean—around five million years ago, Dr. Key said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Smallest marine mammal: 10 left in Gulf
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/05/world/vaquita-porpoises-endangered-scn/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The world's smallest marine mammal is so critically endangered that there are only about 10 remaining in its sole habitat of Mexico's Gulf of California.</p> <p>But that may not yet spell doom for the vaquita porpoise, according to new research.</p> <p>Vaquitas have been pushed to the brink of going extinct due to illegal gillnetting, which is used to capture shrimp and totoaba fish that share the same habitat as the porpoises. The vaquitas, about 4 to 5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 meters) in length, end up as "bycatch" since they aren't the intended target of the nets.</p> <p>The totoaba fish, whose status is vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species, has a swim bladder that is prized in China and used for traditional medicine -- and even seen as a financial investment. Mexico has outlawed totoaba fishing and made gillnetting illegal where the vaquitas live, but the practice continues unabated.</p> <p>With such a small population left, researchers have questioned if vaquitas were at a greater risk of extinction due to inbreeding.</p> <p>Scientists Barbara Taylor and Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho, who have been studying this risk for more than 20 years, published a 1999 paper suggesting that the "doom hypothesis" of inbreeding could not be confirmed. This is important because if an animal is considered "doomed to extinction" for this reason, conservation efforts may not be pursued, Rojas-Bracho said.</p> <p>Now, a team of scientists -- including Taylor and Rojas-Bracho -- have studied genetic patterns from vaquita tissue samples collected between 1985 and 2017 by Mexican researchers. Taylor is a senior scientist at the Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla, California, and Rojas-Bracho is a conservation biologist and member of the National Commission of Protected Areas in Mexico.</p> <p>"Who would have thought that several decades later these same samples could tell us so much," said study coauthor Rojas-Bracho in a statement. "Genomics gives us clues into the species' past but also lets us peer into the future."</p> <p>And it turns out that these little porpoises have enough resilience encoded in their genetics to recover if gillnetting is stopped. A study detailing the findings published Thursday in the journal Science.</p> <p>"If we can allow these animals to survive, they can do the rest," said study coauthor Jacqueline Robinson, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California, San Francisco, in a statement. "Genetically they still have the diversity that let them thrive for hundreds of thousands of years, until the gillnets arrived."</p> <p>Small but thriving</p> <p>The genetic information from the vaquitas show that they appeared about 2.5 million years ago and adapted to life in the shallow waters of the northern Gulf of California.</p> <p>Over the past 250,000 years, the population has fluctuated from a few thousand to about 5,000 vaquitas -- which is rare when compared with other marine mammals. The fact that they have maintained a small</p>

population for so long has helped to reduce the risks of inbreeding because they have less genetic variation between them. A comprehensive survey of the population in 1997 showed there were 570 porpoises, but that number has declined greatly over the past 25 years.

Vaquitas also experience less harmful genetic mutation associated with small populations. When animals with negative genetic traits mate, it's more likely that their offspring will die.

In the case of this population, that actually helped to purge harmful traits from being spread across the vaquita population.

Vaquitas are small and fast, so they are rarely captured on camera.

"They're essentially the marine equivalent of an island species," Robinson said. "The vaquitas' naturally low abundance has allowed them to gradually purge highly deleterious recessive gene variants that might negatively affect their health under inbreeding."

Variants rarely appear in larger populations of animals because it's more unlikely that two animals with these traits will find one another and mate. But when a population rapidly reduces, those odds increase and their offspring experience "inbreeding depression." This weakens their health and can send a species spiraling toward extinction.

"A prevailing view in conservation biology and population genetics is that small populations can accumulate deleterious mutations," said senior study author Kirk Lohmueller, associate professor of ecology and evolutionary biology and of human genetics at the University of California, Los Angeles, in a statement.

"However, our finding that the vaquita likely has fewer strongly deleterious mutations hiding in the population means that they are better poised to survive future inbreeding, which bodes well for their overall recovery."

How to save them

Gillnets pose the greatest threat because they cause the porpoises to drown.

The researchers ran simulations, based on the genetic information from the vaquitas, to see which scenario worked best to protect them and calculate their extinction risk over the next 50 years.

Immediately removing gillnets from their habitat was the best bet for the survival of the vaquitas. Unfortunately, even modest use of gillnets could lower their chances of rebounding. If vaquita deaths as bycatch decline by 80%, 62% of the population could still go extinct, according to the study.

"The survival of the individuals, and the species, is in our hands. There is a high probability genetically that they can recover, if we protect them from gillnets and allow the species to recover as soon as possible to historical numbers," said study coauthor Phillip Morin, a research molecular geneticist at NOAA Fisheries' Southwest Fisheries Science Center, in a statement.

Surveys were also conducted to observe some of the few remaining vaquitas, and the researchers were pleased to see that they looked healthy and even had calves swimming with them, which means they are actively reproducing.

"Vaquitas have very little time left," said study coauthor Christopher Kyriazis, a doctoral student in ecology and evolutionary biology at UCLA, in a statement. "If we lose them, it would be the result of our human choices, not inherent genetic factors."

Scientists continue to actively monitor the vaquitas. The researchers believe their approach to this study could be used to predict the extinction risk of other endangered species based on their genetics.

Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	05/06 Liberia rebel leader charged in US
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/05/06/Liberian-rebel-leader-charged-immigration-fraud/5341651813874/
GIST	<p>May 6 (UPI) -- A Liberian man accused of being a general for a rebel group that attempted to overthrow the West African nation's government has been charged with immigration fraud in the United States.</p> <p>Laye Sekou Camara, also known by the alias Dragon Master, was charged Thursday with making false claims while applying for a non-immigrant visa in 2011 and an immigrant visa the following year.</p> <p>If convicted, the 43-year-old Mays Landing, N.J., resident could be sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment and a \$ 250,000 fine.</p> <p>"As alleged in the indictment, this defendant attempted to evade accountability for his horrific involvement in Liberia's brutal civil wars by fraudulently obtaining U.S. immigration documents," U.S. Attorney Jennifer Arbittier Williams said in a statement.</p> <p>Camara is accused of being a high-ranking officer of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, one of two rebel groups that wage civil war against the Liberian government of Charles Taylor starting in 1999.</p> <p>The war was "characterized by brutality, war crimes and atrocities, many of which were perpetrated by LURD rebels," who also recruited and used child soldiers, the Justice Department said.</p> <p>The indictment against Camara states he applied for a non-immigrant visa in June 2011 and in doing so falsely stated that he had not been a member of a rebel group and had never committed, ordered, incited or participated in political killings or other acts of violence.</p> <p>His application was approved and Camara received a visa to enter the United States.</p> <p>The next year, he applied for a U.S. immigrant visa and is accused of falsely denying that he had not sought entry into the United States by fraud or misrepresentation and that had never engaged in the recruitment or use of child soldiers.</p> <p>Again, his application was approved.</p> <p>He is also accused of using his fraudulently obtained Green Card in June 2017 in seeking a Pennsylvania state identification card.</p> <p>"The defendant in this case, Mr. Camara, is alleged to have served as a high-ranking general for a rebel group that fought in the Second Liberian Civil War, all the while employing tactics of unimaginable brutality, including the recruitment of child soldiers," said William Walker, special agent in charge of the Homeland Security Investigations Philadelphia Field Office. "This indictment alleges Mr. Camara then attempted to shield his violent past when he came to the United States by failing to disclose his affiliation with the rebel group.</p> <p>"We will not allow the United States to be a safe haven for those attempting to hide from their past," he said.</p> <p>From the late 1980s until the early 2000s, Liberia was subsumed with civil war, with the first starting in 1989 and ending in 1997, resulting in the deaths of some 250,000 people.</p>

	<p>Taylor was elected president that year, with the second civil war beginning in 1999 when LURD and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia waged war against the new government.</p> <p>The second civil war lasted until 2003.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/06 EU: Europe turns into world cocaine hub
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/europe-turns-into-cocaine-hub-multi-billion-euro-market-expands-eu-says-2022-05-06/
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS, May 6 (Reuters) - Europe is increasingly becoming a hub for production and trans-shipment of cocaine to other regions of the world, in addition to being a major consumption market, EU agencies said on Friday, warning also about the expanding methamphetamine industry.</p> <p>After cannabis, cocaine is the most consumed drug in Europe, with millions of users and sales of around 10.5 billion euros (\$11.1 billion) in 2020, according to a joint EU report by law enforcement agency Europol and drugs agency EMCDDA.</p> <p>The European market is growing, driven by higher production in South America and also by expanding capabilities to process the raw drug in Europe itself. It could grow even more with new types of smokable cocaine products being developed, the report said, warning of higher health risks.</p> <p>"More production is also now taking place inside Europe, indicating changes in the region's role in the international cocaine trade," the report said.</p> <p>Belgium appears to be at the centre of the industry in Europe, according to data collected by the EU agencies. It is the EU country that seized the most cocaine in 2020, the last year for which data is available, for a total volume of 70 tonnes mostly at the port of Antwerp, against 49 tonnes in the Netherlands, Europe's second biggest nation for seizures.</p> <p>Belgium is also a leading country in processing coca paste, alongside the Netherlands and Spain, according to the report, which cites as evidence seizures of large quantities of chemical precursors for cocaine production and information about processing facilities.</p> <p>Cocaine imported into Europe from South America is increasingly re-exported to other parts of the world, notably the Middle East and Asia, making Europe "a key trans-shipment point for drugs originating elsewhere," the report said.</p> <p>The European market for methamphetamine is also growing, but remains much smaller than that for cocaine, the report said, noting it was difficult to estimate its precise size.</p> <p>The synthetic stimulant drug has traditionally been produced mostly in the Czech Republic and consumed in Eastern Europe, but new data shows demand is growing in Western Europe, especially in Belgium, which has become a major producer of the drug.</p> <p>"There is now growing concern about production facilities located in Belgium and the Netherlands, where methamphetamine can be produced on a considerably larger scale," the report said.</p> <p>Europe is a leading producer of methamphetamine worldwide, and European producers are now increasingly working with Mexican criminal groups to refine production processes, the EU agencies warned.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Murdered, Missing Indigenous Peoples Day
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/kalispel-tribe-hosts-ceremony-honor-020600874.html

May 5—Past the Northern Quest Casino's crowded casino floor of slot machine music and bright neon lights, a quiet crowd of about 80 people listened in on the Kalispel Tribes' Frog Island Singers perform a somber ceremonial drum song.

Sixty-five red dresses hung from the ceiling on Thursday, as part of the Kalispel Tribe's commemoration of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Peoples' National Day of Awareness.

While some tribes may have opted to honor a broader community of murdered and missing Indigenous people, the Kalispel tribe focused on Native women.

"With this installation, the Kalispel tribe and Northern Quest Casino brings attention to our mission mothers, aunties, sisters, cousins, daughters and nieces in an effort to raise awareness for the violence of this epidemic," said Nick Pierre, a Kalispel member .

According to a U.S. Department of Justice study, Indigenous women are 10 times more likely to be murdered than all other ethnic and gender groups in America. Four out of five Indigenous women will experience violence. More than half will experience sexual assault at some point of their lives.

The Kalispel tribe organized a comprehensive list featured 60 Indigenous people who are missing. The list is vast; spanning from Janice Hannigan, who was reported missing in March 1971, to Dawson A. Poorbear, missing since April 13. The list also detailed which law agencies the report went to, from the Seattle Police Department to the Yakima Community Service office.

There are reportedly 126 people missing within Washington who are not included on the list because those cases have not been investigated. Before the day of awareness, five more names were brought to the Kalispel Tribe and did not make the list. A moment of silence for 126 seconds was held to honor the missing people.

Above the list, nearly 60 red dresses of all sizes hung in a display. Indigenous Canadian artist Jaime Black created the first display in 2011 at the University of Winnipeg. This work of artistic activism has been adapted all over North America.

"Red is a powerful color that transcends the physical world and calls to our ancestors in the spiritual world," Pierre said.

The varied dresses oscillated within the casino's ceiling display; a flowy dress perfect for a teenage girl's spring fling, a toddler-sized, layered dress for someone's first birthday photos.

They pulled at the heart strings, as people could envision the vanished spirits of those who would dazzle in the clothing. In the center of the red dress display was a jingle dress, specifically designed for the MMIP Day of Awareness by Kalispel tribal member Stephanie Shoop, who incorporated historical details. In the center of the red velvet dress was a red handprint, the symbol usually painted across the mouth of MMIP supporters. Shoop also used deer bone embellishments carved into the shape of elk teeth, which are a symbol of value of the girl or woman gifted the teeth.

"It was really important that we find dresses of all different sizes and shapes and styles and age ranges to reflect the diversity of the Indigenous women that are missing. We tried to be mindful of ... the proportions of young children that are missing out of the Indigenous women population," said Kalispel member Kyndra Gamache . "It's hard to wrap your head around the 65 women who are missing but you can't not understand how big of a problem this is if you see all these dresses and how many there are. It's a great way to give it realness instead of people think it's some abstract number."

Kurt Holmes, a Kalispel member who is expecting a daughter soon, also spoke to the ongoing crisis. As his family prepares to welcome a new spirit, he recalled feelings of guilt and worry for his unborn child.

	<p>"Part of that's like ... should I be hoping for a boy because they're a little more safe?" Holmes said. "That's the world we're living in right now, and that's not OK ... this stuff is still going on, that's what it's saying, that Native women are less important and don't mean as much. We have to bring awareness to this."</p> <p>Tribal elder Shirley Blackbear fought through tears in the event's closing remarks, citing an appreciation for those who attended for Native women.</p> <p>"These women that are lost, children, the aunts, the mothers, maybe even grandmothers — they are important part of our Native culture, they are our givers of life, they protect the home, the healers," Blackbear said. "Each red dress represents what we truly believe ... this is an important day for us all to remember who we come from and honor these ladies and children that are missing."</p> <p>After the event, Blackbear referred to her role in eldership as a generational responsibility, especially being close with survivors of violence against Indigenous women, which she called a "crisis."</p> <p>"Events like these are well received, needed and with the crowd that formed here, it was something that was appreciated," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Native families plan for own abductions
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/community/facing-race/missing-murdered-indigenous-women-safety-plans/281-f8551c20-c122-4b63-a456-54eb9cdd6a92
GIST	<p>TULALIP, Wash. — Advocates say many Native American women – in an effort to combat the plague of missing people in their communities – often put together a safety system to protect themselves: it’s called “the plan.”</p> <p>Native American women in Washington state are four times more likely to go missing, compared to white women, according to the Seattle Indian Health Board (SIHB). Research from the SIHB reveals the city of Seattle and Washington rank among the highest in the nation for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG).</p> <p>In Abigail Echo-Hawk’s home, everyone in the family knows about “the plan.”</p> <p>“These kids, along with my own, they know that if their aunties or if their mom ever went missing that we would never have left them on purpose,” said Echo-Hawk, the executive vice president of the Seattle Indian Health Board.</p> <p>It’s a plan, Echo-Hawk said, every Native woman she knows has had to make – what her family should do if she were to disappear.</p> <p>“They would need to make sure someone came and looked for us,” Echo-Hawk said. “In my office, right now, there is a dress. I'm an artist. And on that dress are my handprints and red ink. And in my handprints, you can see I very purposefully ensured that my fingerprints were there. And I did that with my sons. And I told them, ‘If I ever go missing, here's where you can find my fingerprints if you need to identify my body.’”</p> <p>Highest rates of MMIWG in the country</p> <p>In Washington, Indigenous people are going missing or being murdered at the second-highest rate in the country, according to the Urban Indian Health Institute. The latest data from 2018 shows 71 MMIWG cases in Washington. Seattle itself ranks as the city with the highest number of cases nationwide with 45.</p> <p>The latest figures from Washington State Patrol records show 126 Indigenous people in the state who aren’t accounted for.</p>

“Research has shown us that the primary perpetrator of the acts of violence against Indigenous women and girls are white men and predominantly white men who come onto reservations or target Indigenous women within urban settings,” said Echo-Hawk.

With fewer resources, Native American families are forced to take matters into their own hands and form plans for their loved ones.

“I’ve actually posted something on Facebook – if I ever go missing, know that I didn’t do it on purpose. Come look for me. I wouldn’t just disappear,” said Nona Blouin, who has spent the past two years looking for her own missing sister.

[Mary Johnson](#), 40, was last seen Nov. 25, 2020, walking east on Firetrail Road on the Tulalip Reservation. “We don’t want her flame to go out,” said Blouin. “So, we’re trying everything we can to keep her name and face up there.”

Johnson’s sisters, Nona and Gerri, believe she may have been a victim of human trafficking.

“My little or eldest daughter, she’s like, ‘Mom, can we email the chief and ask where she is? Mom, why aren’t they looking for her? How come she’s not home yet? She can’t be that lost.’ I didn’t want to tell her that she was missing. So that’s what I told her,” said Blouin.

Tulalip Police Chief Chris Sutter said police believe Johnson trusted someone and got into a vehicle that hasn’t been seen since.

Sutter sees Johnson’s case as a continuation of what’s been happening to Indigenous people in America for centuries.

“Historically, you know that the wrongs that have been committed, including abductions and murders and rapes and all forms of sexual assaults and other types of abuses, have gone unpunished and unprosecuted, and so this has been perpetuated for centuries,” said Sutter.

And it’s because of that history Sutter has talked to his own children about “the plan.”

“My children have all heard dad preach to them about (how) to be aware of their surroundings and their situation and don’t trust people,” said Sutter.

Art meets activism

Back in Seattle, Echo-Hawk hopes future generations won’t need to prepare for their own abduction or murder by having a plan.

“Having a plan is part of the hopelessness that’s experienced by our communities,” Echo-Hawk said. “It’s not something anyone should have to do.”

Until then, Echo-Hawk creates hope from unlikely sources.

When the Seattle Indian Health Board asked for personal protective equipment during the pandemic, the [federal government sent them body bags instead](#). However, Echo-Hawk is using the body bags to create art as a way to highlight the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

“I’m really thinking about every single person as a blossom, as beloved life,” said Echo-Hawk as she sewed pieces of those body bags into flowers.

The blossoms will adorn a skirt patterned with red, yellow and black handprints.

One of her works, which was also made from body bags, was [featured in Vogue Magazine](#) last year.

“There is hope on healing the past so that we have full healing for our community,” Echo-Hawk said. “I refuse to let the hopelessness be all the conversation.”

How to help

If you have any information on Mary Johnson’s disappearance or any other missing Indigenous person, contact the Seattle FBI office at (206) 622-0460. To submit a tip regarding a missing person case to the FBI, fill out the form [here](#). You can remain anonymous.

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HEADLINE	05/05 Ruling threatens high-seas drug policing
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/ruling-threatens-us-power-as-worlds-high-seas-drug-police/
GIST	<p>MIAMI (AP) — Jeffri Dávila-Reyes says he’s still mystified how he ended up serving hard time in a U.S. federal prison.</p> <p>His cocaine bust at sea was closer to his homeland of Costa Rica than the United States, and the few kilos of drugs he was carrying were bound for Jamaica rather than American shores.</p> <p>His plight is similar to hundreds of foreigners swept up by the U.S. Coast Guard in international waters every year, most of them poor, semiliterate fishermen from Central and South America driven to smuggling with offers of more money than they’ve ever seen — in Dávila-Reyes’ case \$6,000.</p> <p>“Nobody can be blamed for being born poor,” he wrote in a recent letter to The Associated Press.</p> <p>But now, seven years into his 10-year sentence, Dávila-Reyes’ conviction has been thrown out in a little-noticed ruling that threatens a key weapon in the United States’ war on drugs: A decades-old law that gives the U.S. broad authority to make arrests on the high seas anywhere in the world, even if the drugs aren’t bound for the U.S.</p> <p>It’s a law that helps the U.S. bolster its drug-interdiction numbers and flex its maritime muscle in a region where drugs are trafficked most. But since it often targets smugglers at the lowest rungs of the drug trade, it has yet to make a dent in the huge volumes of narcotics flowing into the U.S.</p> <p>“It is a waste of U.S. taxpayer dollars to have these costly misadventures as we play drug police to the world,” said Eric Vos, head of the public defender’s office in Puerto Rico where Dávila-Reyes’ case began. “Our enforcement efforts and multibillion-dollar expenditures should concentrate exclusively on drugs actually entering America.”</p> <p>At issue is the Maritime Drug Law Enforcement Act, passed by Congress in 1986 at the height of the crack epidemic. It defines drug smuggling in international waters as a crime against the United States and gives the U.S. unique law enforcement powers anywhere on the seas — whenever it determines a vessel is “without nationality.”</p> <p>But how a vessel is deemed stateless sometimes gets messy.</p> <p>When the Coast Guard chased down Dávila-Reyes’ speedboat in the western Caribbean in 2015, he and two cousins who were seen frantically trying to dump packages of cocaine overboard identified their vessel as hailing from Costa Rica, according to the FBI’s summary of the investigation.</p> <p>But other than the markings on the boat’s side resembling Costa Rica’s flag, the men lacked any documentation proving its nationality. When the U.S. asked the Costa Rican government to confirm the vessel’s registry, it responded 12 weeks after the bust that it could neither confirm nor refute the claim.</p> <p>A few weeks later the men were charged and eventually pleaded guilty to possessing narcotics “on board a vessel subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.”</p>

The conviction would have gone unnoticed if not for a challenge brought by a group of dedicated public defenders in Puerto Rico, where many of the drug cases are tried.

A three-judge panel of the First Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston ruled in January that the law's provisions — equating a nation's equivocal response to an outright denial of a captain's claim of nationality — were an unconstitutional extension of U.S. policing powers beyond America's borders.

Tellingly, almost none of those prosecuted under the law had ever set foot in the U.S. nor were they charged with trying to import cocaine. In Dávila-Reyes' case, the five to 15 kilograms of cocaine he was convicted of transporting were purportedly bound for dealers in Jamaica.

Despite the ruling, Dávila-Reyes remains behind bars as the Justice Department seeks reconsideration by all of the First Circuit's nine judges. His two co-defendants were released in 2018 and 2020 after completing sentences of around five years each.

ENDLESS WAR

From the moment President Richard Nixon declared "war on drugs" in 1971, the U.S. Coast Guard has been at the forefront of the campaign to stop illegal narcotics from entering the U.S. Today, it spends more than \$2 billion annually as part of that effort. Other federal agencies — the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Customs and Border Patrol, the Departments of State and Justice — kick in billions more.

The aim of the high-seas busts is to seize cocaine at a vulnerable choke point and inflict heavy losses on traffickers, limiting the amount of drugs that make it onto U.S. streets.

But, almost from the start, that goal has proven elusive.

Cocaine prices, a gauge of supply, have been hovering at historical lows for more than a decade as cocaine production from Colombia has soared to record highs. In a good year, barely 10% of cocaine shipments in the waters off Central and South America — where the bulk of the world's cocaine is trafficked — are actually seized or destroyed, according to the U.S. government's own estimates.

Despite that poor record, U.S. officials continue to tout their success at sea.

A 2020 Coast Guard report said at-sea interdictions are the most effective way to combat cartels and criminal networks. Since 2017, the amount of cocaine it has seized or destroyed exceeds 959 metric tons.

"We are hitting the drug traffickers where it hits them most — in their pocketbooks," Rahul Gupta, the White House drug czar, said at news conference earlier this year in Fort Lauderdale to welcome a U.S. Coast Guard cutter home from a three-month deployment that yielded seizures of 30 metric tons of cocaine and marijuana worth \$1 billion.

But nowhere to be seen among the drugs piled neatly on deck were the 86 foreign drug runners responsible for the contraband, some of whom had been offloaded and jailed the day before.

Prosecutions under the Maritime Drug Law Enforcement Act exploded last fiscal year to 296 — nearly five times the number a decade ago, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, which collects Justice Department data. But since each case involves multiple defendants, the actual number of foreigners detained at sea last year was 635 — the highest tally since 2017.

Each offense carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years because of the large amounts of cocaine involved.

Critics of U.S. drug policy say most such smugglers fell into the job because of poverty and are hardly worth locking up for so long when legions of their poor compatriots stand ready to take their place.

Dávila-Reyes, for example, had to quit school in the third grade to help support his family, eventually finding hand-blistering construction work for \$10 a day.

“These are not masterminds like Pablo Escobar or Chapo Guzman,” said Kendra McSweeney, an Ohio State University geographer who has spent years researching U.S. drug policies.

“But if you’re trying to hit numbers, and nobody is measuring the importance of those numbers, then all the incentives are there to keep going,” she said. “It makes people feel good about themselves but it’s egregiously ineffective.”

FLOATING PRISONS

After Dávila-Reyes’ bust, he said he was mistreated while adrift at sea, allowed to bathe just once a week, and served spoiled, foul-smelling plates of beans.

“I couldn’t eat this food,” he wrote in a series of letters in Spanish to the AP from his West Virginia prison.

AP was unable to verify Dávila-Reyes’ account but attorneys appointed by the courts to represent foreign drug runners say such tales are commonplace.

Miami defense attorney Bert Dominguez pointed to courtroom testimony last year in which a Coast Guard officer described how detainees are shackled by their leg to the deck of a cutter. The restraints are removed only to allow the detainees to use the bathroom, take a shower or for a short amount of daily exercise.

“They’re treated like warehoused fruit,” Dominguez said.

The U.S. Coast Guard rejects that characterization and says all suspects have regular access to medical treatment, personal hygiene products, shelter from the elements and regular meals after being detained.

“The Coast Guard treats each person entrusted to our care with dignity and respect,” said Cmdr. Matt Kroll, a spokesman.

What’s undisputed is that 19 days passed from the time of Dávila-Reyes’ detention until he made his initial appearance before a federal magistrate in Puerto Rico. By the standards of justice in drug boat cases, that’s actually fast: nationwide, the average delay is more than 23 days, according to an AP analysis of 28 cases this year involving 89 foreign nationals. In one case, the wait lasted 46 days.

U.S. criminal proceedings mandate that suspects, even those apprehended outside the country, be brought before a judge “without unnecessary delay.” Typically, that means no more than 48 hours after arrest.

Kroll said the Coast Guard seeks to ensure a “timely” transfer of suspects but justified the prolonged detentions because of the need to maintain ongoing law enforcement operations across vast geographical distances.

“The government is operating under this fiction that they’re not really arrested when they’re taken into custody and chained to a deck of a Coast Guard cutter,” Miami public defender Tracy Dreispul said during the hearing last year where the Coast Guard witness testified. “But we all know what arrest means.”

LEGAL FALLOUT

Neither the Coast Guard nor Justice Department would comment on Dávila-Reyes’ appeal but experts say it’s too early to judge the fallout from the landmark ruling.

Currently Vos' office in Puerto Rico is preparing 14 motions for dismissal in other boat cases on behalf of jailed defendants from Colombia, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic. The ruling has also been cited in at least five proceedings outside the First Circuit.

Of the 28 interdictions on the high seas this year, 10 involve a claim of nationality for the vessel that a foreign government was unable to confirm or deny, according to an AP analysis of court records. In only five cases there was no nationality claimed and in the remaining 13 the court records did not say.

"It's definitely a chink in the armor," said Roger Cabrera, a court-appointed attorney in Miami seeking to leverage Dávila-Reyes to appeal his own client's conviction. "But like most chinks, I'm sure the federal government is already looking for a workaround."

For now, U.S. law enforcement continues to conduct regular search and seizures on the high seas with little indication of concern.

In court filings, attorneys for the U.S. government have argued that the procedures for boarding a vessel and determining whether a claim of nationality is legitimate are governed by bilateral treaties, including one with Costa Rica, which has never complained that its sovereignty was being violated.

Further, they said holding up interdictions to wait for an unequivocal denial of registry from a foreign nation before declaring a vessel stateless would be impractical and quickly encourage traffickers to claim their vessels are from small Micronesian states, or North Korea, where diplomatic contacts are limited.

"Anyone involved with bringing dangerous drugs into the United States will be held accountable, no matter their position in the drug distribution network," said Justice Department spokeswoman Nicole Navas Oxman. "These offenders are an intricate part of drug-trafficking networks, which pose a direct threat to the health and safety of American communities."

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HEADLINE	05/05 Crime rate impact hinders 'return to normal'
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/05/05/american-crime-rate-impact-pandemic-recovery/9591580002/
GIST	<p>Olga Sagan closed the doors to Piroshky Piroshky bakery in downtown Seattle in February after a fatal shooting around the block from her business.</p> <p>The surge crime in the area has made it too dangerous for her to open the store again, she said. So the Russian bakery remains closed today.</p> <p>"We cannot guarantee safety for our employees or our customers anymore. We have to close," Sagan said.</p> <p>As cities try to go back to the hustle and bustle of pre-pandemic life, one hurdle remains: crime. Crime rates have spiked across the nation since the onset of the pandemic, and many downtown areas are still struggling to quell crime and bring people back in.</p> <p>"We always assumed once people go back to work, once kids go back to school, things are going to be better and we'll see the crime that will go down," said Christopher Herrmann, an assistant professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. "That's certainly not what we're seeing."</p> <p>The FBI last year reported a nearly 30% increase in murders in 2020, the largest single-year increase since the bureau started keeping records. And violent crimes went up over 5% during the first year of the pandemic.</p>

While violent crimes have surged, the levels remain well below the rates documented in the 1980s and 1990s. [Violent crimes in the U.S. peaked around 1991](#) at a rate of about 758 violent crimes per 100,000 people, according to FBI data. In 2020, that rate was around 398.

"We're still really far away from the bad times that some of us may remember of the late 80s and early 90s," Herrmann said. "We're nowhere close to that."

Still, cities across the country – from [New York](#) to [Chicago](#) to [Milwaukee](#) to [Los Angeles](#) – have seen significant spikes in crime since the onset of the pandemic and the problem doesn't seem to be getting any better, Herrmann said.

Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell in March released [a safety plan](#) that includes a mobile precinct in the area. Seattle police is focusing on monitoring hotspots – high-crime areas – among other strategies, as the police department deals with a staffing crisis, said Sergeant Randy Huserik, public information officer for the Seattle Police Department.

"The city has put in a mobile precinct right in that hotspot of 3rd (Avenue) and Pike (Street) in downtown," Sagan said, "and that mobile person has helped in the last couple months."

Crime in public transit

Leaders in major cities like New York and Chicago, meanwhile, are tackling a surge in crime rates on buses and trains.

With the arrival of COVID-19, ridership suddenly dropped in transit systems as businesses and schools shuttered. As ridership dropped, crime rates climbed in some cities.

"The subway and the public transit events are driven or have at least been made more apparent by the absence of riders," said Dorothy Schulz, a retired captain with New York's Metro-North Commuter Railroad Police Department.

In New York, for instance, the rate of violent crimes per million rides rose from 1.45 in 2019 to 2.71 in 2020, according to [a report by the think tank Manhattan Institute](#). Between 2020 and 2021, the report noted, violent crimes increased by 8%.

In Chicago, transit crimes were [already spiking before the pandemic](#). Mayor Lori Lightfoot in March announced measures to address safety concerns from riders, including the deployment of more officers and security guards across the Chicago Transit Authority system.

"Though we are proud to have one of the best transit systems in the country, that reputation and everything we're doing to keep it will mean nothing if CTA customers don't feel safe taking public transportation," [Lightfoot said in a statement](#). "Violence on our transit system must end, as people shouldn't have to fear for their lives when they're commuting around our city."

Tackling crime

There's "no one simple solution" to combating crime in the U.S., Herrmann said.

Herrmann said the [spike in crime during the pandemic](#) could be attributed to stressors such as unemployment and housing and food insecurity. But even as the economy recovers and restrictions have been lifted, crime rates have remained high.

As local leaders try to draw people to downtown areas, the increased foot traffic could serve as a crime deterrent.

"If there's not a lot of people around and there's a couple bad guys there, then the bad guys are gonna see everyone as potential victims," Herrmann said. "But if everyone is back at work, then the bad guys

	<p>won't see a lot of victims, they'll see a lot of people that are going to mess up their victimization, their offending."</p> <p>He said one way to address climbing crime rates could be changing policing tactics, "which to me means more precision policing, you know, arresting the right people, not harassing the wrong people," and focusing on prevention.</p> <p>"We invest a lot of time in making sure we catch the bad guy, but we don't invest a lot of money or time into helping the bad guy not commit a crime," Herrmann said.</p> <p>Sagan hasn't closed up the downtown bakery permanently yet, but she's not sure what it will take for her to open the location again. She said, though, she'd like to see "a solid policy from the government that is consistent and reasonable" to combat crime.</p> <p>"I cannot close permanently yet," she said, "because I'm kind of hopeful still for the community in downtown."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Businesses call for action after ax attack
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/project-seattle/sodo-business-owners-call-for-action-in-wake-of-violent-ax-attack-at-encampment
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Frustrated business owners are demanding action in the wake of a violent and disturbing attack last month by a man at a notorious homeless encampment in SoDo in which the suspect allegedly used an ax, pole and a wooden plank to attack his victim.</p> <p>Julian Brassea—Caballero, 43, has now been charged with assault in connection with the overnight beating on April 29 at the camp, located at 3rd Ave. S. and S. Walker Street. As of Thursday, he remained at the King County Jail in lieu of \$150,000 bon</p> <p>Prosecutors and the judge agreed to the high bail to keep the accused attacker off the streets. He is expected back in court on May 16.</p> <p>The latest attack comes as city leaders have finally acknowledged rising crime near encampments. The vicious ax attack is disturbing but not surprising for business owners.</p> <p>“There has been this overall feeling of lawlessness and our businesses for a long time have felt completely abandoned and ignored,” said Erin Goodman, executive director of the SoDo Business Improvement Area. “While not everyone living in these encampments is involved in criminal activity, the encampment themselves are dangerous.”</p> <p>According to court documents, Brassea—Caballero busted into the tent where the victim was asleep before hitting him in the head with an ax and then beating him with a pipe and plywood.</p> <p>A few days later, someone burned down the accused attacker’s tent at the same encampment.</p> <p>Goodman said she's been pushing for action for years.</p> <p>“This area that we’re standing in has not had any interaction with social workers or the city in two years,” Goodman. “And it has developed into an unsafe situation for everyone involved.”</p> <p>According to court documents, Brassea—Caballero’s “intent was clear, telling the victim multiple times that he was going to kill him or take him out.”</p> <p>Court documents also show he was acting “out of control” and “delusional” before the attack.</p>

	<p>The suspect's criminal history includes 17 arrests, a felony assault conviction in 2019, several misdemeanor convictions for assault and assault with sexual motivation.</p> <p>Not too far from where the ax attack, another incident was reported in which a woman repeatedly stabbed a man at their encampment on 13th Ave. South.</p> <p>He fired back at the woman with an AK 47 type rifle which was later confiscated by police.</p> <p>“People have access to guns more, and pretty much everyone has a knife,” said interim Seattle police Chief Adrian Diaz. “So, when we’re seeing assaults, it’s resulting in some level of weapons in these encampments.”</p> <p>KOMO News recently asked Chief Diaz what’s being done to fight the rising crimes, especially now that city leaders have directly tied them to encampments.</p> <p>“We’re creating teams like the unified care team that the city is creating, making sure we’re giving people resources,” said Chief Diaz. “But at the end of the day we have to deal with some of the criminal activity and public safety issues that are in many of these encampments, and we’ve got to clean that up.”</p> <p>Businesses say they’re optimistic, but the city needs to take action fast.</p> <p>“This street needs attention now,” Goodman said. “While we want to be patient, the situation that’s happening here, we can no longer be patient.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/05 Spokane: arrest; series drive-by shootings
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/spokane-police-arrest-drive-by-shootings/293-63c7684b-dcc4-4ef6-839a-dcb92c33dcb2
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Spokane police have made an arrest in a series of drive-by shootings in north Spokane this week.</p> <p>Spokane Police announced they arrested 20-year-old Gregory Lynch on Thursday night. He is wanted in connection to several drive-by shootings on Monday and Tuesday night, including one shooting where a woman was shot multiple times.</p> <p>Police found Lynch at an apartment in the West Central neighborhood around 8 p.m. on Wednesday night. SWAT and other resources were called in and worked more than three hours to get Lynch to surrender.</p> <p>Police said they believe that Lynch fired more than 40 rounds at homes, cars, and neighborhoods in the past two days.</p> <p>Police arrested Lynch on four counts of a drive-by shooting, first-degree assault, and unlawful possession of a firearm. He has been booked into the Spokane County Jail. Police said he has three prior felony convictions for assault.</p> <p>East Dalton Ave. and Helena St. The first shooting was reported around E Dalton Avenue and N Helena Street around 10:37 p.m. This is one of three shootings in the area, which is just east of Gonzaga Preparatory School.</p> <p>The Spokane Police Department (SPD) said it received multiple calls of “shots being fired.” When police arrived they found a parked car that had been hit with gunfire. The shooter had already left the scene, although police say they did find other evidence. No victims were found in this shooting.</p> <p>West Knox Ave.</p>

The second shooting was reported about half an hour later, at 11:13 p.m., in the [1900 block of West Knox Avenue](#). This is just north of the West Central neighborhood.

Once again, police found a parked vehicle that had been shot multiple times. Police say evidence indicates over a dozen shots were fired. Police did not find any victims or suspects at the scene.

East Dalton Ave.

Just before midnight, police received a call that a person had been shot in the [1600 block of East Dalton Avenue](#). When police arrived, they found a woman who had been shot multiple times.

Police said it appears that a shooter, or shooters, walked up to a house and fired about 20 shots inside. Police said there were multiple children, including an infant, inside at the time of the shooting, along with several adults.

The woman was the only person hit by the gunfire. Police say she was taken to the hospital with serious injuries.

At this time, the police haven't released the name of the victim, but a [GoFundMe campaign](#) was established to support the woman, who, according to the verified GoFundMe page, she is recovering at the hospital from her injuries.

According to the GoFundMe campaign post, the money will go toward helping the woman's family pay for her expenses while she is at the hospital. The money raised will also help pay for the costs of her daughter, who is under the care of the woman's family. As of Wednesday, May 4, the GoFundMe fundraiser page has raised nearly \$8,500 from its \$30,000 goal.

North Perry Street and East Dalton Avenue

The following night, police responded to the shooting near North Perry Street and East Dalton Avenue just before 11 p.m. on Tuesday night. Police said that shots were fired between two vehicles that were driving through the area.

A third vehicle, that was not involved, was hit by the gunfire. Police said the people inside that vehicle were able to get away to safety and were not hurt.

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HEADLINE	05/05 Spokane police: students threaten staff
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/investigations/spokane-police-investigating-students-threatening-staff-members-lewis-and-clark-high-school/293-93896c54-a477-4b33-b5b1-b22245e2f263
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Spokane police are investigating a tense moment inside Lewis and Clark High School after a mob of students reportedly threatened staff members.</p> <p>A Lewis and Clark staff member spoke to KREM 2 anonymously and described the scene as "something out of a movie." There was a lot of screaming and yelling, and students seemed to have a "prison" mentality.</p> <p>The incident happened on May 5 just after 11 a.m. during lunch. A staff member tells us that a group of students were threatening another student. The scene escalated and, according to Spokane police, the mob grew to 75-plus students.</p> <p>Spokane police received multiple 911 calls. According to SPD, an unidentified caller said that the situation had de-escalated and that police were not needed. Then, a campus security officer called and said that things were not okay.</p> <p>When police arrived, officers determined that they did, in fact, need to be there. They found a large group of students around the student office.</p>

Spokane police says that no arrests were made today. However, they are reviewing video and plan to file charges against at least two students tomorrow. Those charges will be handled through the juvenile court.

It was also reported that many students had their phones out and were recording what happened.

Late tonight, KREM 2 got hold of a letter sent from Lewis and Clark's principal to staff members, addressing the situation that unfolded at the school today. We've received this letter from multiple sources.

In it, the principal writes:

"Today during lunch, we had students harass and pursue a student saying demeaning, threatening, and harmful things to her. The student was trying to walk away, but the group of students continued to follow her and make threatening, mean, and harmful comments. This incident began on the ground floor hallway by the library and then moved to the first floor by the student and main office area."

The principal continued to write that staff tried to stop the incident but the students continued to make verbal threats. And, that 911 was called.

The letter concludes with the principal writing that the students are being emergency expelled.

At this point we don't know how many student were expelled. But, we will continue to follow this story and bring you more as soon as we get it.

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HEADLINE	05/05 Mexico: journalist killed; 9th this year
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/journalist-killed-northern-mexico-9th-year-84532142
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY -- Another journalist was found dead in northern Mexico on Thursday, the ninth media worker killed in the country so far this year.</p> <p>Prosecutors in the northern state of Sinaloa said the body of Luis Enrique Ramírez Ramos was found on a dirt road near junkyard in the state capital, Culiacan.</p> <p>Prosecutors said his body was wrapped in black plastic, and that he died from multiple blows to the head.</p> <p>Ramírez Ramos, 59, was the ninth reporter or photographer killed this year in Mexico, making the country the most dangerous place in the world for the press outside war zones.</p> <p>Ramírez Ramos' news website, "Fuentes Fidedignas," or 'Reliable Sources,' said that he had been abducted near his house hours earlier. Prosecutors said that he had not been reported missing to police.</p> <p>The Committee to Protect Journalists said it lamented the killing and "calls on authorities to urgently investigate this act."</p> <p>Ramírez Ramos is listed as "founding director" of the website, which has reported relatively little on the drug cartel violence that plagues Sinaloa, which is home to the cartel of the same name.</p> <p>Fuentes Fidedignas did, however, report on local political disputes, which is often a risky subject for reporters in provincial Mexico, especially in Sinaloa.</p> <p>But the website also includes a section on "good news" about Sinaloa, and in its mission statement says "just as we denounce vices and corruption, we also cover the industrious, hard working and generous nature that our good people give the state."</p>

Francisco Chiquete, a fellow reporter in Culiacan, said “Luis Enrique Ramírez was a very professional and capable journalist” and noted he had expressed fears about retaliation for his work as long ago as 2015. Prosecutors said he had not reported threats at the time to police.

Chiquete said he wasn’t aware of any more recent threats against his colleague, who also wrote columns for the Sinaloa newspaper El Debate.

Many killings of journalists in recent years in Mexico have been blamed on drug cartels, and journalists in the most violent cities, like Culiacan, often avoid the topic of cartels for their own safety.

But in a 2015 interview with MVS radio station after the killing of fellow reporter Humberto Millan, Ramírez Ramos said “I don't write about narcos, I speak neither good nor ill of the narcos. Humberto Millan didn't either, and that was not enough to keep him alive and working.”

“What is happening? Humberto Millan and I only write about politicians, and now it turns out that we can't write about politicians either, so what are journalists in Sinaloa going to write about?” he said at the time.

Mexico's state and federal government have been criticized for neither preventing the killings nor investigating them sufficiently.

While President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has promised a “zero impunity” program to investigate the killings, on Thursday the head of that program listed only six killings of journalists this year, even though there have been eight.

And the president continues his frequent verbal attacks on journalists whose stories he dislikes, calling them “conservatives” and “mercenaries,” and using information from supporters — and apparently tax agencies — to publicize the income of reporters he dislikes.

Press groups say López Obrador’s daily criticisms of journalists make them more vulnerable to violence.

In February, the Inter American Press Association called on the president to “immediately suspend the aggressions and insults, because such attacks from the top of power encourage violence against the press.”

And in March, the European Union approved a resolution that “calls on the authorities, and in particular the highest ones, to refrain from issuing any communication which could stigmatize human rights defenders, journalists and media workers, exacerbate the atmosphere against them or distort their lines of investigation.”

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